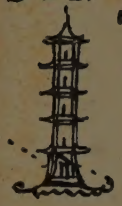








SIKIANG



KUKUNOR

Tsaidam  
Burkhan Buddha  
Shuga Range  
Sources of  
Huang ho  
Charing nor

Kukunor

Kanchow

Liangchow

Sining

Huang ho

K A N

Lanchow

Pingliang

Kungchang

ORDOS

Ninghia

Yen an

King yang

Feng siang

Sian fu

MINIAK

Minshan

S. Jan River

Batang

Lung an

Ya chow

Cheng tu

Shun king

Kia ting

Chun king

Si chow

Yungning

Ning yüan

Li kiang

Rin sha

Tali

Yungchang

Kütsing

Yün nan

YUNNAN

Lin an

Kai hua

Kuang nan

KUICHOW

MLAOTZE  
SAVAGES

Hing gi

HUNAN

Ta ting

Chen yüan

Kui yang

Yuan chow

Li ping

Kuilin

Ping so

KUANGSI

Siu chow

Nan ning

Taiping

TUNG KING

Hanoi

Lien Chou

Kiao chow

Pakhou

Lei chow

Kung Chou

Gulf of  
Tung King

Hainan

A Map of  
CHINA





Mukden  
SHENKING

SEA  
OF  
JAPAN

G. of  
Pechili

Korea  
Bay

Soul

WANG HAI  
OR  
YELLOW SEA

Korea

TUNG HAI  
OR  
EASTERN SEA

Loo choo Islands

Loo kin or Loo choo Islands

Formosa

Taiwan

NAN HAI  
OR  
SOUTH SEA







# HILLS OF BLUE

DJH



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PENCIL SPEAKINGS FROM PEKING

DISSOLUTION

MATER DOLOROSA

THE WISDOM OF AKHNATON

THE TWILIGHT-HOUR OF YANG KUEI FEI

THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN









CH'ING KAO TSUNG SHUN HUANG TI (1710-1799). REIGN NAME CH'EN LUNG  
IN HIS OLD AGE



# HILLS OF BLUE

A PICTURE-ROLL OF CHINESE HISTORY

FROM FAR BEGINNINGS TO THE DEATH OF  
CH'IENT LUNG, A.D. 1799

BY

A. E. GRANTHAM

WITH 19 PORTRAITS AND A MAP



METHUEN & CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON



# HILLS OF BLUE

A PICTURE-ROLL OF CHINESE HISTORY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR

J. E. GRANTHAM

*First Published in 1927*



METLICK & CO. LTD.  
25 ESSEX STREET W.C.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



TO CHINA  
IN GRATITUDE FOR MANY  
YEARS OF HAPPINESS







## PREFACE

**T**HIS book is not meant for the learned. Let sinologues take warning and not waste their time on it. Its object is to cut up the solid food of their erudition into the lighter sugar-coated pills more palatable to the general reader. Therefore, though accuracy has of course been the constant aspiration, the mark chiefly aimed at was the emphasizing of the human interest, of the colourful beauty and ethical significance of that immense drama, the history of Chinese culture, and to trick out dry facts with the decorative detail gathered in the course of prolonged residence in China and close association with her ancient art.

For the romanization of Chinese names the system adopted by Giles, for the chronology the one chosen by Wieger have been followed. But for the interpretation of the events they chronicle I must take the whole responsibility on my own shoulders, relying, I hope not in vain, on the leniency of the public, in consideration of the enormous difficulties of the task attempted with the rashness of the fools who rush in where angels fear to tread.

A. E. GRANTHAM

PEKING, 1927







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# HILLS OF BLUE

## INTRODUCTORY

### THE DEEP FOUNDATIONS

**I**N the days of the T'angs, when a poet sat on the Dragon-throne and people ran together in crowds to watch an artist fling the miracle of his fearless lines on a white-washed temple-wall, the fashion arose of painting the landscapes one wished to remember on long rolls of paper or silk. Wrapped in brocade, tied with ribbon, fastened with jade, when their full length was slowly, lovingly, reverently unwound, they revealed the wonder of "10,000 miles of scenery" compressed into a few feet of space, vivid foregrounds of trees on which each leaf was painted, of streams with every ripple marked, of fields with every rice-plant showing, a middle plane with buildings, bridges, waterfalls, foothills of verdant slopes and massive rocks, a distant range of sombre mountains and further still, beyond the pathway of the clouds, faint and far, the hills of blue; sometimes an isolated summit, sometimes the fantastic zigzag of lofty plateaus, inaccessible peaks, precipitous passes, always the ultimate edge of visible earth straining to reach infinitude.

Viewed from the accumulation of bygone years, the history of China in its remoteness and its nearness, its vagueness and explicitness, its heights and its depths resembles such a picture-roll. Painted by generations of artists, each adding a new inch to the length of the whole, with new aspects, shapes and colours, it is nevertheless only one picture, every section, for all the diversity of detail, linked to what precedes and follows it by an inherent unity of manner, a central identity of thought and style. Indeed this underlying unity is stronger, this inner cohesion tougher than in any other history and helps to explain that astounding tenacity which enabled it to flow into to-day although a member, no doubt the youngest, but clearly a member of the great group of primordial civilizations, the Sumerian, the Egyptian, the Indian. These have been used

up by the derivative ones as stepping and as building stones, but the Chinese, unless wilfully destroyed by the iconoclastic frenzy now masquerading as progress, could still preserve its specific character, which is the secret of its life.

A profoundly interesting and varied life. As in the gradual unwinding of its rivers and its roads the picture-roll shows all manner of men, soldiers on the march with gleaming weapons and waving flags, pilgrims prayerfully toiling upwards to some white pagoda, Emperors and Empresses resplendent amid the gorgeous pageantry of their dragon and their crested pheasant boats, scholars reading at a quiet window, sages meditating in the shadow of a pine, saints evoking Gods out of the smoke of incense bowls, and humble folk—woodcutters, fishermen, peasants, cowherds, pedlars, artisans; so history records whatever bright or terrible fate overtook them in the course of time and how some of the centuries in which they lived lay in the sunshine of stupendous heights, others in bleak swamps of degradation. For Chinese history, like most history, is not one steady ascent from the archaic to the civilized and subsequent descent into extinction, but a series of upward and of downward movements, of periods of growth and energy and health alternating with ebb-tides of decay, sterility, disease, even as the huge bulk of a mountain-range is shredded into towering pinacles, deep ravines and undulating uplands.

And there is yet another likeness between Chinese history and a Chinese landscape-roll. Just as this seems to begin from nowhere and fades away into an end suggesting endlessness, so Chinese civilization is potentially capable of constant renewal and emerges out of the boundlessness of an antiquity untethered by chronology, uncharted by records or monuments to elucidate the mystery of its origin.

The resulting absence of concrete knowledge has bred a swarm of speculations. Some, on the strength of the prejudice that human civilization or indeed mankind itself was not allowed more than one cradle, connect it westwards with the oldest civilization known, the Sumerian-Babylonian. One proof adduced in support of this hypothesis takes the very concrete and therefore at first sight most convincing form of extremely ancient pottery. Found in burial-grounds of the Stone Age both in China and on the site of ancient Babylonia, it shows a similarity of shape and ornamentation too close to be accidental. Consequently it is claimed that the art of making it originated in the West and was thence carried to China by emigrants trekking East. But since the remarkable genius for ceramics shown by the Chinese in historic times may quite well



have manifested itself thus early, it can just as plausibly be maintained that they were the first to produce this pottery and that the art of making it travelled from East to West. Or, again, it might be peculiar to the culturally, even if not racially related nomads, who used to roam in that wide belt of grazing-grounds extending from the Pacific to the Black Sea and beyond. Of course no theory can claim to be more than a hypothesis tentatively put forward to explain facts which occurred so long ago that the actual sequence and causal links between them have been obliterated beyond all hope of recovery.

Another theory assumes a prehistoric wave of immigration from the South, because the earliest Chinese ideographs show an intimate acquaintance with elephants, monkeys and other tropical animals, and because the use of tropical products such as tortoise-shells, rhinoceros-horns and lacquer can be traced back as far as vision reaches at all. But since it has been proved that there was a period when the present Arctic regions were warm and that a luxurious vegetation sheltered dinosaurs in what are now the bleak steppes of Mongolia, it is rash to assume, that at the time of the birth of the Chinese race, the climate of northern China was not totally different from what it became later and that the Yellow River did not in those days, prehistoric but not necessarily pre-human, flow through a jungle in which elephants trumpeted and monkeys chattered, while rhinoceros wallowed in its ooze and crocodiles and tortoises sunned themselves on its sand-flats. Tastes contracted then may well have persisted through the subsequent climatic revolution and supplied a motive for exacting tribute from hordes still in possession of the things needed for satisfying such early and therefore inveterate habits.

A third theory, hot on the trail of a newly discovered Nordic Iberian culture, argues eloquently for a prehistoric immigration from the North, while yet another, haunted by the wet ghost of a semi-submerged Pacific civilization, staunchly maintains an eastern maritime invasion. Indeed every quarter of the horizon has in turn been made the starting-point of the great phenomenon of Chinese culture, regardless of the fact that this is merely a geographical extension, not by any means a solution, of the problem of its origin.

A fifth theory, with a smaller display of learning, but perhaps a greater one of reason, rests content with believing that the traditions of the Chinese themselves, based on the tenacious memory of a keen historical sense, are really better guides to their history than foreign speculations, however erudite. Now not even in their furthest legendary outposts do these traditions

contain any trace of a period of wandering, prior to settlement on the spot, where Chinese civilization first stands revealed, along the broad rivers, in the wide plains, in view of the glorious mountain ranges of the present provinces of Shansi, Shensi and Honan. There it appears erect, self-conscious, firmly set, the influences of its physical surroundings stamped on it strongly enough to justify the assumption that it is the product of the soil, the work of an autochthonous race, an original inspiration, a plant grown on its own roots, not a graft from anywhere on some obscurely savage aboriginal stock. As the many little bays and islands of the Ægean shaped the self-centred city type of Greek civilization, so the vast starlit horizons, the far-flowing streams, the warm rich yellow uplands of the lower basin of the Hoang Ho are mirrored in the wide cosmic outlook, the serene dignity, the colourful comprehensiveness characteristic of Chinese civilization. There dwells a peace, a beauty and a vigour in that landscape which account for the harmonious greatness of the cultural idea, that fulfilled itself there, far better than the supposed descent from a distant centre, possibly not radically different but certainly tuned in a totally different key.

Not that Chinese civilization developed in that complete isolation which, oddly enough, is as staunchly maintained as its importation from an outside source. Of course no early culture possessed the amount of opportunities for bastardization which beset the modern world, but at all times inventions are travellers and brave men explorers. There is bartering of goods at border-marts, there is the bringing of tribute, there is looting, there are slave-raids and compulsory shiftings of workers and their families. Neither the fixity of sedentary agriculturists nor the mobility of roving herdsmen is absolute. Floods, droughts, epidemics, the fear of a curse tear whole populations from their old-established homesteads. Physical difficulties, mountain and desert barriers, an unsuitable climate in unaccustomed latitudes set sharp limits to the radius within which a given group of nomads is able to move. Nor was there ever a time when the civilized Chinese were the only inhabitants of the huge stretch of country between Korea and Tibet. They shared it both with tribes differing from them ethnically, and with clans, physically akin, but mentally aloof and alien.

In the North there roamed and raided the unwashed Ti, fur-clad and carnivorous, forefathers of Hiung nu (Huns), Turks and Mongols. They may have attacked their enemies with fire-brands and packs of fierce hounds, as the ideograph used for them is a compound of the characters signifying fire and



dog, and savage dogs are still the chief defence of a Mongol tent.

The Far West was the haunt of the Jungs of the Mountains, their chief weapon the bow as the character shows. Owing to the dangers of the deserts that enclose their grazing-grounds, they were deemed to inhabit uncanny regions of ghouls and goblins (Kuei fang). They and the Ti were classified as the vassals of the uncultured lands, though their vassalage only existed when voluntarily rendered to the Interpreter of the Tao, the Son of Heaven.

In the East, on the littoral and the islands beyond, the tall, long-haired I, later known as the Tung Hu, "squatted on their heels." They used implements of stone. The relationship between them and their civilized neighbours cannot have been very friendly, for the latter called them vassals by constraint when referring to them politely, and thieves, assassins and rebels when speaking candidly. These appellations were also applied to the Man tribes swarming in the South between the Yangtze and the sea, who cropped their hair and tattooed the bodies so as to be taken for "sons of dragons when in the water."

Centuries of frontier contacts, wars and shiftings must have produced a certain amount of racial mixture. Blood relationship with the Hiung nu was actually spoken of under the Han Dynasty. It may also have connected elaborately robed Chinese with some naked fetish worshipper of the southern wilds. However, neither racial purity nor blending possesses much significance as far as the bulk of the population is concerned. Its blood, whatever its composition, is always heavy, slow, opaque, incapable of those luminous mirrorings of cosmic aims which are the soul and source of any genuine culture, and scarcely ever the possession of more than a chosen few. Nor did that of the Chinese ever unduly stress mere racial homogeneity. On the contrary, however highly it valued its pedigrees, it recognized mental aptitude, sincere appreciation of its rhythm, loyal acceptance of its rites as the prime qualification for joining its circle and becoming a partaker of its light. It had both the benign tolerance of anything bearing within itself the possibility of gigantic growth and the exclusiveness of a truly aristocratic conception of life.

For it was no superficial fashion the crowd could copy. It was a faith stern and pure, demanding much inner discipline and much outward observance of complicated rules.

These rules (li) which comprise a system of religious observances as well as the forms of courtesy regulating human inter-

course, are the exterior characteristic of Chinese culture and the practical means of expressing its central impulse, its root idea, nothing less than an understanding reverence for the majesty of creation, the divineness of moral excellence and the obligation to establish or maintain the natural harmony between the way of Heaven, of Earth and of Man.

As the famous philosopher Lao-Tzŭ (born about 604 B.C.) wrote centuries later :

“Once something arose out of non-existence before heaven and earth came into being ; soundless, formless, self-sufficient, immutable. It penetrates everywhere, yet is never endangered ; acts in all that exists, yet its force is never exhausted. Abysmal, it is the begetter of beings ; nameless, the beginning of heaven and earth ; with a name the mother of all creation. It softens asperity, unravels complexity, moderates effulgence, co-ordinates particles. Invisible yet real, I know not whose son it is, but it precedes the sovereign stars.”

Lao-Tzŭ, a thinker rather than an active statesman, stressed the metaphysical side of the Tao. His younger contemporary, K'ung Fu Tzŭ (551-479 B.C.), who was both a thinker and a statesman, emphasized its ethical aspects, acknowledging it as the great moral law inherent both in the conscience of man and in the course of the Universe, the infallible guide to rapturous understanding of the Eternal and Divine. Hence his arresting words,

“He who comes to understand the Tao at dawn, can die peacefully at dusk.”

For the Tao was the symbol which made the mystery of existence a little less incomprehensible, the concept which enabled men to impress a sense of purpose and direction upon the overwhelming boundlessness of natural phenomena, an answer to troubling questions, a release from perplexities and fears, a light which could be followed, taught and enlarged. And no doubt, thanks to a succession of men of such commanding genius, popular gratitude could remember them only in amazing mythological transfigurations, Fu Hsi, the Supreme Radiance (Tai Hao) Shen Nung, the Effulgent Lord (Jen Ti) Huang Ti, the Lord of the Yellow Soil, this thought of the Tao, the Way, did expand into a religion rooted on earth but rising clear into the sky with all the calm of metaphysical detachment, simple, dignified, austere above the tangled undergrowth of crude animistic faiths and modes of worship.

The realization of the Tao is the starting-point of the history of the Chinese as a group separated from their neighbours by the gulf which yawns between civilized and savage mentality, a group whose doings, unlike the meaningless ones of mere



hordes, henceforth consciously and unconsciously serve one original and coherent idea.

No one can say to what period the starting-point should be assigned. Estimates fluctuate between 4000 and 2000 B.C., and might fluctuate more, since the rate of growth of primordial civilization is neither a fixed nor a known quantity. On astronomical grounds the twenty-fifth century B.C. is considered the most probable and 2145 the year of Yao's accession a relatively certain date. That much seems beyond dispute, the great illumination came under the light of another polar star than ours and at a period archaically so simple as regards the material side of life: fermented beverages or the casting of bronze had not yet been discovered. Therefore the primitive, which other civilizations scorn as a time of darkness, came to be honoured as one of enlightenment, and remained associated with a dazzling pinnacle of religious and philosophic insight. Thus the Record of Rites, the Li Ki, states:

"When sacrificing to Heaven, the earth is swept and the offering presented on the ground for the sake of the simplicity of such an unartificial altar."

"Admirable are the must and sweet spirits, but the dark liquor (water) is valued most. . . .

"Reeds and straw are preferred to woven mats of bamboo. The grand Soup is unseasoned in honour of its simplicity. The Grand symbols of jade are unengraved in admiration of complete plainness. The flesh is set forth raw. The idea of simplicity is what is preferred and honoured most highly."

Similarly, the most rudimentary drinking vessel, the gourd, and the earliest covering, a garment of leaves, remained characteristic alike of historical and legendary saints. And saints, developed as militant priests into powerful leaders, were the first Emperors of China. "Examining into antiquity" K'ung Tzŭ perceived standing there on the threshold of written history, immense, majestic, almost superhuman, the three model rulers, Yao, Shun and Yü. Of Yao it is said:

"He was serious, lucid, gifted, full of deep thoughts, humble and genial. His light shone to the four quarters of the world and reached from Earth to Heaven.

"Under him the myriad states came into concord and the black-haired people were transformed."

Of Shun it is said:

"He is called the Doubly Illuminated. He laboured in unison with the Lord. His wisdom was profound, his intelligence accomplished, his gravity benign, his honesty sterling. His hidden virtue was made manifest on high; therefore was he called to the throne. He was

charged to exemplify the five rules and the five rules were fully observed. He was invested with 100 stewardships and the affairs of the 100 stewardships functioned in proper time and sequence. He received the guests at the four gates and at the four gates perfect harmony prevailed. He was sent to inspect the forests at the foot of the mountains. Through wild storms of lightning and hail he passed undeterred."

"He fished in the Thunder Mere and all the inhabitants near by showed true neighbourliness to each other. He fashioned vessels of clay on the river bank, and they all were faultless. Wherever he dwelt a village arose by the end of one year, by the end of two years a borough, by the end of three, a city."

"The radiant virtues of the realm all began under Shun the Lord."

Of Yü it is said that to conquer the floods, which, stretching to the edge of the horizon, surrounding the mountains and submerging the hills, had afflicted the country for many years,

"he spared his body no laborious toil, his mind no anxious planning. Thirteen years he stayed away from his house. Thrice he passed the door of his house and dared not enter. He stinted himself in raiment and food but was lavish towards spirits and Gods. He contented himself with a mean dwelling but spent immense amounts on ditches and canals."

"He opened up the nine provinces, cleared the nine roads, embanked the nine marshes, levelled the nine mountains."

"He nourished the people. He regulated the course of turbulent streams and rendered them navigable. He drained swampy soil and made it arable. He subdued the floods from rivers and lakes. Then bamboos multiplied and fine grasses and mulberry trees and the people could come down from the hills to which they had fled and again cultivate the rich soil of the plains."

All this he was able to accomplish because his virtue was

"vast, indefatigable, awe-inspiring, so full of wisdom, spirituality and intellectual gifts, exalted Heaven deemed him worthy of the mandate and gave him the sovereignty over all within the four seas."

For merely secular monarchs such praise seems excessive, and many apocryphal details having gathered round them as well, a fashion has arisen of denying their existence altogether. They are flung unto the discard of the mythical and the incredible. But the moment they are recognized as primarily the heads of a special religion, as pontiffs of whom it was believed that their holiness attracted divine blessings and warded off evil, then the difficulty of accepting them as real disappears. They are not a legend, they are an ideal lived by men whose main function it was to set an example to their people and to mediate between them and the mysterious Powers of the Universe, especially of Heaven whom they alone, endowed as they were supposed to be with magical gifts, knew how to worship in the right and only efficacious manner. Nor did that worship ever cease to remain the Emperor's prerogative and



most essential duty. When Yao and Shun proceeded on journeys of inspection of what would be more appropriately called their sphere of influence than their empire, their first care was to commune with Heaven by kindling a fire and letting their burnt offering rise up in a column of smoke from the height of a sacred mountain. In their old age both chose as collaborator and successor some one not famous for wealth, noble birth or warlike deeds, but, as becomes a pontiff, remarkable only for a moral excellence exemplifying complete harmony with the highest demands of the Tao.

The wide reach of Yü's authority as evidenced by the geographical data of the Yü Kung, a record of the taxes paid by subjects and distant tribes, without a sign of his having possessed the efficient army and administration which a merely political control of so large an area implies, is another indication that what these early Sons of Heaven governed was a religious community rather than a secular empire.

In the manner of its kind it was not averse to proselytizing if necessary at the point of its arrows. One of the most serious wars waged was religious and directed against the San Miao, at that time not enemies of different race and speech but heretics who would not accept Yao's and Shun's teaching. As over everything about which men are passionately convinced, battles were fought over the validity of promiscuous exorcism. Blood flowed freely and Yao's side does not seem to have secured a decisive victory. Long after his death, when Shun in his turn growing old had appointed Yü as his assistant and successor, the Miao still "ignorant, erring and insolent" again refused to "follow the Tao." Even a whole month's fighting failed to break their obstinacy.

Then a better way was chosen for converting their hardened hearts. Because "the right faith could move even divine spirits" it would surely also influence human beings if applied with sufficient intensity. The troops were withdrawn, Shun redoubled his efforts to demonstrate the blessings of a righteous and enlightened peace. On the terrace "between the two stairways there was dancing with shields and with feathers" to exorcise obduracy with the magic of rhythmical motion and soul-stirring melody.

"In seventy days the Miao came and submitted."

Incidentally this passage reveals that one of the great achievements of the early prophets of the Tao was the imposing of a harmonious sequence on the uncouth gestures and jumpings of primitive man, just as by a carefully thought out system of

ceremonies they provided adequate and repressed excessive expression of his emotions. The Record of Rites says about this :

“ The ancient sovereigns instituted ceremonies and music for men to master their passions ” and “ taught the people to keep the right balance between their predilections and their aversions.”

“ Men’s feelings being the field, the sage Kings used the virtue of solemn rites for ploughing it, the ethics of righteousness for sowing it, the lessons of the school for weeding it, examples of love for reaping its harvests, training in music for giving it rest.”

Indeed, on account of the “ deep influence music exerts on man, affecting manners and customs, they made it one of the foremost subjects of instruction.”

In germ both the spread of the Chinese empire by the attractiveness of its culture rather than by the terror of its arms and the long honour-roll of Chinese art are contained in the ancient sages’ choice of so gentle, so beautiful and withal so searching a discipline as that of education by means of manners and music.

But men are wilful creatures given to chafing even against a silken thread. Under Yü’s son heresy again raised its obstinate head and so threateningly that six armies had to be sent to repress it. “ The Prince of Hoo insolently violated the five elements, scornfully abandoned the three regulating principles (of Heaven, Earth and Man). Therefore Heaven decreed he should be destroyed and dispossessed,” since although theoretically mercy and redemption by the mere power of good example were the ideal for calling strayed sheep back to the fold, in practice sharper means were often resorted to, and the five punishments (various mutilations, exile and death) were always ready to the ruler’s hand. The Dragon with the formidable flash of his eyes, the fierce strike of his claws, the brooding silence of his slumber in deep waters, and his triumphant soaring above the black of thunder-clouds fitly symbolized the demoniac quality that entered into the nature of the Pontiff Emperor’s sovereignty, at one time remote, ascetic, divested of every earthly thought and passion to become a pure vessel for receiving divine blessings and transmitting them to the people ; at another the tender parent solicitous about the material welfare and mental training of his children, the laborious multitudes ; or again the terrifying executioner of the justice and the wrath of God.

Clearly so exalted and many-sided a part could only be played by a man of the highest moral and intellectual attainments, nor could his power rest on anything but the people’s



belief that his superiority was sufficiently great to ensure the approbation of the Lord on high, without which the cosmic harmony producing peace on earth below could not be maintained. If, wearying of watchfulness, he sank into self-indulgent vice, he too was liable to be severely punished.

A large space is taken up in the Shu Ching, the Book of History, by what are called counsels, real sermons delivered by faithful ministers, lineal predecessors of the future censors, exhorting the Son of Heaven not to carelessly forfeit his claim to the divine mandate. He was warned not to tolerate slothfulness in himself or others, not to sink into lust and dissipation; neither to sacrifice principles for the sake of pleasing the people nor to oppress the people for the sake of gratifying his own fancies; sedulously to work at his improvement in view of eternity and to let his every thought be filled with the light of the Tao.

Miraculous portents spoke the same language. Eclipses, droughts, floods, the appearance of strange animals were interpreted as heaven-sent warnings whenever he fell short of the prescribed standard. On the other hand, when he more than reached it, as in the case of the Great Yü, Heaven showed approval by making a sacred tortoise rise out of the River Lo to bring him the Universal Law (Hung Fan), that strange revelation outlining the puzzle of human existence on a background of the rhythm of the seasons foreshortened into proportions which could be managed and memorized. It also dwells at length on the necessity for the ruler to remain constant in his pursuit of the royal way of righteousness.

Gradually an elaborate ritual came to enshrine him, both to protect him against lapses into wickedness and to save the people from the calamities which such lapses entailed. The colour of his clothes and ornaments, of his chariot and his flags, the choice of his food, the shape of his dishes, the size of his cups, all had to conform to the deeply-thought-out symbolism interpreting the seasonal changes of the year.

"If in spring the regulations laid down for summer were followed, rain would fall unseasonably, plants and trees decay, the states be seized with panic. If those laid down for autumn were followed pestilence would decimate the people, gales work havoc, thorns and thistles choke the grain. If those laid down for winter were to be followed, snow and frost would blight plants and trees, the first sown wheat fail to ripen, raids and strifes spread desolation."

It was no idle formality but a matter of grave importance, that the Son of Heaven should wear green in spring, red in summer, white in autumn, black in winter, correspondingly

changing his food from the spring diet of wheat and mutton to the summer one of beans and chicken, from the autumn bill-of-fare of hempseed and dog-flesh to the winter one of millet and sucking pig. The ritual vessels he used, followed the same cycle, and were either perforated or tall, either square or very deep.

At the beginning of each season indicated by the culminating at dawn and dusk of a new constellation, after purification and self-adjustment, he would set out in state with his grandees to welcome spring outside the eastern, summer outside the southern, autumn outside the western and winter outside the northern gate of the city, and issue orders for the officials and the people to adapt their work to the special requirements and the spirit of the new season. All undertakings furthering happiness and fruitfulness were done in spring and summer in conformity with the genial, expansive, life-giving influences then predominant in nature. Harsh, coercive measures like war, hunting, executions, cutting down trees were relegated to autumn and winter; when nature set the example of destructive sternness, and life was shrinking back into its roots.

Notable annually recurring events were the occasions of special festivities. Thus "in the second month of spring when the insects stirred in their burrows and began to come forth, when the thunder was about to utter its voice, when Sirius was the evening star," the Son of Heaven and his queens would celebrate the arrival of the first swallow by offering a great sacrifice to the God of marriage. In the following month "after vigil and fasting the Empress went to the eastern orchard to attend to the mulberry trees" and other duties connected with the weaving of silk, so as to encourage that important industry by personal example, just as in the first spring month the Emperor, to encourage agriculture, himself ploughed six furrows. It was an impressive ceremony accompanied by sacrifice and the chanting of a solemn hymn:

"When through the dew of early dawn Scorpion blesses husbandry,  
Then the Sovereign bethinks him of his people's greatest need,  
And leads dark-coloured oxen to plough the fruitful fields."

At the two crucial times of the year, the summer and the winter solstice, more specially at the latter, during which the Yin principle of darkness and death attaining its zenith gives way again to the Yang principle of light and life, the ruler would fast and purify himself, "put away all indulgence in music and beautiful sights, and observe an awed silence so as not to disturb the Tao" in the eternal conflict between the waxing and



the waning of its breath. His main mission being that of a link between the will of Heaven and the welfare of mankind, as long as his mind was one with the calm of the Universe and he sat placidly on his five mats surrounded by sorcerers in front, recorders behind, diviners on his left, blind musicians on his right, the people felt they could go about their daily tasks in full assurance of being assisted by the benign spirits and protected from all evil ones. In course of time the five mats expanded into a magnificent throne, politics overshadowed religion and a keen struggle for ascendancy foamed through the centuries between the sorcerers sinking into meaningless magic and the recorders arising to genuine learning. But regard at least for the outward ritual of holiness never ceased. Half the halls in the Emperor's Palace remained temples, his most gorgeous robes vestments, his only untransferable functions sacerdotal. The recent abolition of his office was a secularization, not a democratization of the state, not the overthrow of a benighted despotism, merely the putting away of a venerable symbol, the removal of the keystone of the whole arch of Chinese culture. Consequently it is not only the dethroned dynasty that was cast into impoverished exile, but the whole nation was turned adrift into a maelstrom of false ideas, hollow phrases, unintelligible facts fighting each other and fermenting in a stygian darkness, now and then rent asunder by the red roar of an explosion. If Chinese civilization had been a composite structure with mechanically superimposed parts, easy to alter or replace, it might have been different. But it was a live organism, not any one member of which could be destroyed without grievously affecting the whole. And the Sovereign Pontiff was more than a member, he was the heart of the organism, its regulator not so much by his actual power as by his mere presence, the point of rest around which all movements circled as the constellations circle round a motionless yet dominant pole. In the very earliest days, the Sages divided the firmament into four palaces of the four seasons radiating from the fifth or central palace of the Heavenly One (T'ien Yi) or the Supreme One (T'ai Yi), the Polar Star. And since, according to the faith that was in them, the firmament was above all a luminous mirror showing the divine model which earth and man were enjoined to follow, they mapped out what was underneath Heaven (Tien Hsia), into the four regions of the four quarters, each with its own sacred mountain and grouped round the fifth and middle region containing the capital, always the residence of a single man, the Son of Heaven, the Solitary One, the earthly counterpart of the Polar Star. It never was the meeting-place of elders or a folk-

mote as with the Germanic tribes, for whom these, not the king, are the primary embodiment of the national idea. The Chinese sovereign was literally the father of his people, for without him the 100 clans, into which it used to be divided, would never have coalesced into a state at all. Whenever his unifying influence was weakened or withdrawn, the component groups invariably fell asunder, tumbling into a chaos of bloodshed, strife and brigandage. For as bees form a hive only when possessing a queen, so the Chinese people could not organize themselves into a smoothly functioning state without the centripetal force of an emperor. This idiosyncrasy they share with the ancient Egyptians, to whom their Pharaoh also was the prerequisite of political activity. Indeed many more races fail to achieve any sort of greatness unless held together by the symbol of a crown than the modern predilection for republics would care to admit.

In any case, regardless of passing fashions, this innate bias towards a royalist form of government must be accepted for Chinese history as an elemental fact, that made the monarch indispensable, not merely for the welfare of the nation, but for its very existence. Recognizing this and guided by living instinct, not by dead theories, the people, again like the bees, would toil and fight and die for their sovereign without a second's hesitation, nor ever question his right to ample maintenance and implicit obedience. Did not the Gods themselves bow before his will? Even such fundamental ones as the Spirits of the Soil and the Harvests, standing for what an agricultural community cherishes most, followed instead of controlling the fate and changes of the dynasties founded by the Pontiff-Kings.

Generally a change of dynasties coincided or even was causally connected with many other changes, from the cut or colour of clothes to alterations in the calendar and the administrative system and the abolition or revival of religious ceremonies. On this account dynasties provide the only workable division of the long stretch of Chinese history. Nor can any names but theirs be used for connoting the variations in style which differentiate one period from another. Abstract ones like classical or mediaeval are practically useless, for one thing is true of the otherwise grotesque and wholly fictitious legend of a nation petrified for centuries in ultra conservative immobility, however much dynasties might change, however long the train of innovations might be which a new dynasty would introduce, the dynastic principle itself remained rigidly fixed, immune from all challenge, not by any means because experience



proved it to be above criticism, but because, being the expression of an unconscious urge, it lay beyond the reach of human caprice.

A change of dynasties was sanctioned by precedents set in 1766 B.C. by no less a man than T'ang the Victorious, destroyer of the first, and in 1122 by Wu Wang, overthrower of the second dynasty. Both are numbered among the model rulers, for neither the theory nor the practice of the loyalty due to the sovereign ever gave up the reservation, that a ruler hateful in the sight of Heaven, oppressive and abhorrent to the people, forfeited his claim to allegiance and that it was not only pardonable but positively meritorious to supplant him. However, that there should be no Son of Heaven on the Dragon Throne, that was as inconceivable as that there should be no sun on the horizon.

Before the septic disintegration of the homogeneity of Chinese culture, it was fully understood that the monarchy was one of the deep foundations on which that culture rested. Ancestor-worship was the other and for the same reason.

Thinking and feeling mainly through the eye, and an eye which looked at things not with the dissecting scrutiny of the exploiter but with the reverence of the artist, the Chinese was keenly sensitive to their dependence on each other and visualized them comprehensively steeped in the aura of their affinities and natural surroundings. The cry of his soul was for symmetry and decorative ceremoniousness. Vases must go in pairs, tripods rest on a stand, temple and palace halls be approached by wide avenues and set off by noble courtyards, gates and terraces; authority must make itself credible by a physically dazzling display of splendour, justice by a spectacular show of severity. Big things were to him not isolated phenomena, but the centre of lesser ones and these again not separate atoms, but essentially foils to the big ones. Thus he saw a lofty peak as the host, the lower summits as his guests, insects in their relation to flowers and birds, these in relation to sky and trees; children in relation to parents and ancestors, who merged into the mysterious forces of the Universe.

He was in fact a relativist, not in Einstein's sense, but as the opposite of an individualist. The sentiment with which Ibsen sums up the ideal latent in the Germanic race, "He is strongest who stands alone," was entirely foreign to his temperament. His folk-lore knows of no Prometheus chained to a cliff and defying the Gods, no Siegfried or Saint George setting out alone to slay a dangerous monster. Not that there was a dearth of those whom the eternal hunger of the soul drove forth upon

some lonely quest. On the contrary, long before Buddhism China had her holy hermits, her anchorites of the mountains, and the solitary sage haunts almost all her landscapes. But these men left human companionship not to emphasize their individuality by resonant deeds, but to lose it in the first and most final relationship of all, that of nature. And whereas the Germanic training chiefly aims at inculcating physical courage, mental independence and moral self-reliance, the first and foremost care of Chinese education was to teach the right behaviour in the five principal human relationships between friends, husband and wife, subjects and rulers, parents and children, elder and younger brothers. This right behaviour demanded self-effacing politeness, deference, humility far more than determined self-assertion. To teach a child to stand up against the world self-opinionated, self-willed and single-fisted was totally alien to every inborn idea of the fitness of things.

Possessing the artist's and sedentary worker's spontaneous appreciation of the value of peace, an appreciation which the born fighter only acquires painfully and imperfectly through his wounds, endowed with great powers of affection and therefore inclined to be timid and clinging, in order to safeguard the peace he cherished so much, the Chinese instinctively sought a refuge against the dangers and difficulties of life. The family offering the first and most natural one, remained the strongest ; next in importance came the guild, the sect, the group of kindred spirits. Even the scholars, who often rather than be false to their principles, faced martyrdom with unflinching courage, did so not as the champions of their own opinions, but as the guardians of a sacred heritage, and in prison, on the rack, at the place of execution felt surrounded by a cloud of witnesses and sustained by the spirit of the ancient sages and of their own bodily ancestors. Similarly young China, in spite of its wordy enthusiasm for liberty and self-determination, shows no sign of genuine individualism. It has merely shifted its allegiance from native to foreign systems of thought and left the shelter of its own traditional wisdom to seek that of the Pragmatisms, Socialisms, Bolshevisms and other "isms" sizzling in the cauldron of Euro-American mentality.

Now this traditional Chinese wisdom, developed along the lines laid down by the temperament of the people amongst whom it took shape, was saturated with their sense of relationship, their profound feeling for the interdependence of all created things, their picturing of the world of objects and occurrences as a closed circle of phenomena symmetrically connected in the favourite combination of two pairs and a centre,



making up the mystic number five. Thus the changes of the seasons on earth were linked up with those of the stars in the firmament, the abundance or failure of harvests with the moral qualities of the ruler; the five alternating world constituents water, fire, wood, metal, earth with the organs of the human body, the five colours with five directions of space and so forth. On this basis of continuous relationship the Chinese mind, true to its artistic, non-analytical bent and more concerned with harmoniously placing than with accurately explaining phenomena, worked out a marvellous system of recurrent transmigrations of balance, poise and rhythm, a fluid merging of one state into another, the whole quickened by the Tao, the originating impulse, the road which leading on from form to form, from event to event, prevented a single one being left in unrelated, inexplicable isolation. Though the light of fuller knowledge has shown up some errors, the fundamental axioms of the system possessed greater depth and wider applicability than many a modern one and for long centuries did provide an explanation of the Universe compact, intelligible, wholly satisfactory, free from distracting riddles, agonizing doubts and terrifying lacunæ.

Indeed it took the horror out of emptiness by finding in it the quintessence of the Tao. Long contemplation of the stars had made the ancient sages divine immense forces pulsating through the seeming vacuity of space and enabled them to teach poets, artists and musicians to use it fearlessly and freely as their subtlest, their most significant mode of expression. The one terrible gap which death, the annihilator of the individual, tears through every other optimistic system of thought was radiantly filled by faith in the survival of the ancestor, physically in his descendants, transcendently among the influences eternally directing fate. The custom of choosing a grandson rather than a son to impersonate the deceased ancestor at his funeral ceremonies seems to show, that his survival or rather revival was originally pictured with all the unsophisticated crudeness still to be found among some Ethiopian tribes, who believing him to be actually reincarnated in the body of his grandchild, make the newly-wedded wife of his son ceremonially eat some grains of wheat placed on his skull.

Be this as it may, the faith in racial continuity made the grave, which in spite of soothing dogmas of resurrection is to most races a symbol of agonizing finality, a monument of joyful beginnings, the sanctuary marking the birthplace of a family with all its potentialities of achievement, pride and acquisition. A simple mound in the shadow of green trees, it was not an

irrevocable end but the starting-point of two parallel rows filled or waiting to be filled by the graves of those in whom the life-blood of the ancestor had gone on flowing. Power went forth from it, whether its own or that accumulated by the fervour of the countless prayers uttered, the solemnity of the many religious services held there.

When Tai Kia, grandson and successor of T'ang, founder of the second Dynasty, with the wilfulness of inexperience forgot the duties over the sweets of power, the prime minister I Yin, determined to save him from himself, sent him to meditate for two years in the ghostly presence of his dead ancestor. He hoped the impalpable influences emanating from a sepulchre would prove more eloquent than the warnings of living men. And it did. Tai Kia "became sincerely virtuous," almost as good a ruler as T'ang himself. Indeed, the protecting power of ancestors over their descendants was believed in so firmly, it never was suffered to be very far off. The tablets on which their spirits rested, placed on a chariot of honour, accompanied every military expedition and since the ancestors were held to be the dispensers of heavenly bounty, it was in front of them that the warriors who had distinguished themselves in battle received their reward. Marriages were solemnized in their presence, new-born sons presented, important events announced to them, for the founders of a family were felt to dominate its destinies as long as their graves remained undisturbed and their altar bright with offerings.

It followed that the care of graves was a paramount duty, their destruction a crushing calamity, since it endangered the wonderful bond which, linking generation unto generation in a common reverence, transmuted the natural fear of death into a religion of unrivalled sincerity and sweetness, and overcame grief at the transitoriness of individual existence by triumphant assurance of racial continuity. Theoretically the two rows of graves prolonged from that of the ancestor could, like Chinese history, extend from a boundless past into an endless future. If, as Oskar Spengler says, the road should be considered the fundamental symbol of Egyptian, this would be true also of Chinese culture. But whereas the Egyptian concept of the road, evolved in a country stretched along a single river terminating in the sea, became an avenue leading processionally to the grave and the spirit world beyond, the Chinese road, conceived among many plains, mountain-ranges and rivers prolonged in apparent endlessness along immense horizons, spread from the grave down ever-widening lines of successive generations.



Pedigrees being kept with the utmost care, the faithfully recorded number of these generations attained extraordinary dimensions. For instance, the descendants of K'ung Fu Tzū now stand in the seventy-seventh generation, and as he himself could trace his descent from the Shang Dynasty (1766 to 1122 B.C.), practically unbroken continuity has been maintained in this family for thirty-five centuries. A remarkable achievement, rendered possible only through ancestor-worship, which raised the family above the casual shiftings of ordinary life into the stable height of a divine institution and enjoined its preservation as one of the foremost of all religious duties.

The Chinese state, being built up not of individuals living in a family but of families composed of individuals, necessarily benefited by this passion for continued existence, and ancestor-worship acted as a powerful life elixir far beyond its immediate circle. It did more. It provided the stimulus for the earliest religious architecture.

Whereas, perhaps on the strength of the conviction that since man could never build anything commensurate with the vastness of the great Divinities, he should offer them his adoration in profound humility, on the very simplest altar, temples seem to have been erected quite early to shelter the soul-tablets of the Ancestors. In all likelihood they possessed the stately wooden pillars, the bold sweep of roof, the elevated platform, certainly the rudiments of that quiet grandeur later ages were to bring to such a pitch of perfection. For the same massive dignity appears also in another branch indebted to ancestor-worship for its inspiration, namely the casting of bronzes. Cups, cauldrons, tripods and bells, inimitable in the grand flow of their lines, the majority belonging to the third, but some dating back to the second dynasty, have been brought to light out of the darkness of the earth they shared for ages with the silent dead. They were designed for ritual use in the temple of the ancestors and contain what, apart from the writings on oracle-bones and slips of tortoise-shell or horn, are the oldest inscriptions extant. They are mostly dedications, like the following :

" On the Ch'ên Shên Day the new ruler went to the Gate of the East and at sundown ordered his minister to take five strings from the store of cowries to be used for offering in his presence food, libation-wine and weavings in gratitude for the five impressions of his deceased father I's foot and hand, which appeared during the sixteen months of mourning. In memory whereof this vase has been placed in the sanctuary."

The date corresponds to 1273 B.C.

Such ghostly impressions are often mentioned. The ancient

script renders them very vividly, spirit marks merely of the heel or of the whole foot of the ancestor walking round the altar to inhale the savoury odour of offerings, apparitions of his entire body floating down towards the feast spread out for him, sometimes just his eyes watching over the gifts, the conduct and the welfare of his offspring. The evocation of spirits was evidently a recognized and no doubt frequently a successful practice. The prolonged vigil in the mourning-shed, coupled with a graphic imagination, would easily hypnotize the bereaved into an excellent medium for occult manifestations.

Ancestor-worship, therefore, also lifted a corner of the shroud that hides the hereafter from human eyes and built a rainbow bridge of visions between the living and the dead. It hallowed the fields with the graves and sanctified the home with the soul-tablets of those one had loved or of whom one felt proud. It was a sublimation and a prolongation beyond death of the "hsiao," imperfectly translated as filial piety, really all the love, devotion and sense of mutual consideration within the family circle. As such it tinged the life even of the humblest peasant with gleams of a grateful reverence more effective than the longest sermons for curbing secret leanings towards savagery.

Based on the warmth and power of blood, this "hsiao" was amazingly strong, the blood itself surging with passions of an elemental vehemence such as latter-day reasonableness cannot even conceive. Three years mourning for parents, which now seems incomprehensibly excessive, represented a counsel of moderation, a rule intended to subdue the destructive violence of emotion by allowing it sufficient but not inordinate scope. Small wonder that when fed from such an inexhaustible source, and enshrined in the holiness of a spontaneous religion, the family coalesced into an unit of extreme toughness, the more so as a third potent factor, economic pressure, likewise favoured this development.

It must be remembered that in the early days of husbandry the individual is practically helpless against the odds with which the colossal vigour of untamed nature opposes his puny efforts, ferocious beasts, poisonous reptiles, ravenous insects, undrained swamps, trackless forests, the struggle against weeds alone a back-breaking problem. Faced by a host of difficulties, lacking a subjugated race on whom to cast the burden of physical toil, the Chinese pioneer farmer, to survive at all, had to produce a large family and keep its working powers tied closely to the parent stem. The hands of wives, children, daughters-in-law were all urgently needed. Grown sons could not be allowed to



leave. The sovereign's call on them for military service was never obeyed with the alacrity with which fighting races dedicate youth to warfare, because it meant that some of the fields, on which the family depended for its subsistence, would be redevoured by the wilderness whence they had just only been wrung.

Under the compulsion of this need for workers, polygamy was accepted, and a hierarchically organized discipline evolved to maintain internal concord and external defence. An intense loyalty, compounded of the loyalty of affection, of joint labour, of comradeship-in-arms, of a religious fraternity, bound all the members together. No other, as for instance loyalty to the country or to an idea, could in the long run compete with it. The famous first Emperor Shih Huang Ti's attempt to supersede it by loyalty to the central government failed completely, and the endeavours of the Confucian School to supplement it by loyalty between teacher and pupil never succeeded to the extent of developing into unwavering loyalty to a party-leader. When in the fifth century B.C. the philosopher Mo Ti preached the volatilization of family in universal love, he began by winning followers. The promise of permanent peace, which the doctrine of universal brotherhood implies, always does win enthusiastic adherents at first. It never retains them. Neither did Mo Ti's sect take root. Not because the most distinguished disciple of the Confucian School, Mêng Tzŭ, opposed it with weighty arguments, arguments themselves never defeat anything—only the will to believe them—but because the instinct of a race, still true to itself, rejected what it felt to be merely an intellectual idea contradicting the actual surgings of the blood, consequently far too unstable to be used as the basis of a state, for which one desired nothing more ardently than an immensely long life.

There was another point on which Mo Ti ran counter to his people's natural bent. A Puritan of the dour, grey type, he disapproved of music at all times and of lavish display at funerals. Blind to the fact that man, especially artistic man, lives not by bread alone, he condemned everything as wasteful extravagance which did not directly increase the supply of food-stuffs for filling hungry mouths, or the number of hungry mouths for devouring the food-stuffs, than which no doctrine can be more detrimental to the cause of progress. His great predecessor, K'ung Fu Tzŭ, on the contrary, perhaps because he lived somewhat earlier, before intuition had been "sicklied over with the pale cast of thought," never propounded a theory, logically correct while practically worthless. Instead he delved into the storehouse of the nation's actual experience, ascertained

by the records of its good and evil men to what heights it could reach, by what depths it was threatened, and measuring it by its historical background, set up as models to be followed heroic lives which really had been lived, as examples to be shunned criminal careers which had actually been run. His ideal, unlike Mo Ti's, not being a bloodless perfection of life as a rationalist would like it to be, but the maintenance of a harmonious balance between the needs and tendencies of life as it is, he kept the family-love which Mo Ti was to scorn, in the position in which he found it, as the cornerstone of China's social structure. With the tolerance of the saint and the wisdom of the statesman he never wasted energy on attacking institutions anchored in the blood of the race. He preferred to concentrate on keeping them healthy and in vital touch with the will of Heaven as revealed directly in the conscience of every moral being, indirectly in the lessons of history. The means he selected for this end show a breadth of psychological knowledge no other ethical teacher has possessed in like measure. Thus, as the incentive for sustained efficiency and periodic improvement, he chose, not the nervous strain towards flickering will-o'-the-wisps of future millenniums, but the dreamy glow of memory conjuring up out of its hoard inspiring recollections of a glorious past ; as arbiters on the doubts and dissensions of the living the ripe experience and sublime incorruptibility of the sainted and heroic dead ; as the bond with which to integrate society, not the outside coercion of law, but the love welling up spontaneously from within ; as the basis of education neither the sordid need to earn a living nor the savage lust of killing, merely the natural joy of youth in music, dancing and pantomime, its instinctive response to the suave yet compelling discipline of rhythm. He took mankind away from the cavern of occult terror, from the ditch of pharisaical bigotry, from the shambles of military glory, from the Dead Sea Fruit-gardens of luxurious ease and took it to the sunny fields of industrious domesticity, guiding it thence up to starlit, wind-swept heights of awed reverence before the might of the Universe, of mystic union with its divine spirit by means of elaborate rites and the wondrous gift of shaping thought and emotion into noble deeds, into music, poetry and art. Too practical not to insist on satisfying the bodily needs of the masses before attempting to instruct them, he nevertheless steered clear of the danger of over-emphasizing the production or acquisition of physical values. What he sought was sovereign independence both from the hardships and the lures of outer circumstances. By the repression of all the meannesses



of vanity, malice, greed and sensuality, by unfaltering cultivation of a large-hearted, reverent attitude towards life, such abundance of inner strength and serenity was to be accumulated as would reduce the trials of poverty and neglect as well as the delights of riches and honours to their true level of utter insignificance.

"Without goodness," he said, "no one can long withstand either misery or opulence." And further on: "The noble concentrates on righteousness, the mean on acquisition."

Living in an age of political anarchy consequent on the eclipse of imperial power, a time when men began to think they could live by the rush-light of their own selfish ambitions or even by no light at all, he realized that what was needed perhaps, not so much to stave off the imminent disruption, as to prevent its proving fatal, was to gather up everything still left of the basic work of the ancients, and engrave the teaching it held so deeply in popular consciousness, it could be carried forward through the storms of disintegration into the safety of happier days of peace and reconstruction. He knew such reconstruction could be solid only if firmly established on the old foundations. Were they not part and parcel of the infallible wisdom of the Universe, intuitively reached by the inspired men of old "to whom God once whispered in the ear"?

Of the two ways of obtaining a working knowledge of the world without, the primary one of intuition and the secondary one of reason, moderns prize the latter most—naturally, since the present is an age dominated by mechanics and reason works through the mechanism of logic. However, to do so successfully, it must be able to draw on a rich stock of codified experience with full liberty to constantly renew and replenish it. Only from abundantly collected and precisely investigated facts can it deduce reliable formulæ. But in the dawn of civilization, when half the world is still aglow with a mysteriousness one adores, but would deem it sacrilegious to pry into critically, reason is compelled to work with an inadequate vocabulary and an insufficient amount of ascertained facts. It therefore becomes so undependable a guide, wherever early man follows it, he almost invariably goes wrong. He reaches truth only when, without the distracting interposition of conscious thought, he gives himself up wholly to the direction of the Tao, to instinct, intuition or whatever name should be given to that clear insight into reality, which leads the bee to the flower and migratory birds through thousands of miles of unknown space. The makers of Chinese civilization worked in this inspired way. The eagle force of genius bore them to the height of fate with one

quiver of its wings and never thought of laboriously rap-tap-tapping on the crutches of logic along arid lanes of reason. Their Heaven-appointed leader, instinct, with its unfailing adaptation to life, made both the founders like Yao, Shun and Yü and the preservers like Lao and K'ung Tzū, among the number of possibilities open to their choice, seize just upon that philosophy which, being least tainted with error was nearest eternity, and that social organization which, corresponding most closely to natural feelings, was most immune from decay.

So it came to pass that when the seers of old sat in the evening twilight and drumming on their earthen jars chanted about the passing of life, while the watchers of the sky greeted the rising sun as a guest in the Valley of Light, or bade it farewell at its setting in the Valley of Gloom, when K'ung Tzū stood on the bank of the river and meditated on the flow of its waters, now sparkling in the gold of noon, now gliding through the black of night, one movement in a myriad waves, they laid their hand on the heart of the world and felt the throbbing of its pulse, the eternal systole and diastole, contraction and expansion of its advancing or receding tide. They found "it was the way of Heaven that from every end there should arise a fresh beginning," that the rhythm of a deep duality vibrated through the Universe, a duality not of antagonistic opposites like vice and virtue, Gods and demons, but of mutually complementary states, which either exactly balanced or regularly replaced each other, any excess of the one automatically raising the other out of its depression, as for instance the sap of spring secretly begins to germinate just when the cold of winter attains its utmost rigour.

This undulating duality came to be expressed by the terms of Yin and Yang, Yin the dark fluid, passive, brooding, female, Yang the light, strong, active, generating, male principle, the triumphant and heroic splendidly ideographed by banners catching the first radiance of the sun, while the Yin principle of death was pictured as the dark womb that absorbs light, not to destroy it, but to let it rest and recuperate. A circle divided into a light and dark half with a germ of light in the dark and a spot of darkness in the light side, symbolized that trend towards mutation which sows the seed of downfall in success, of mercy in enmity, of decay in birth, and of birth in dissolution. Mitigating the dread of pain and the horrors of death, moderating the arrogance of power and the pride of possession, this belief that nothing, neither joy nor sorrow, neither storm nor sunshine will either last or perish for ever, produced an inner calm, a restful feeling of security without which the burden of civiliz-



ation can scarcely be borne. Even more: in a way it made civilization, for the Yin and the Yang were only modulations of an ultimate oneness, which, though undefinable by words, was spoken of as the Tao.

And it is to the Tao we must turn when seeking the origins of Chinese culture. To trace them from potsherds and skeletons is an irrelevant dwelling on superficialities. The force which projected the stupendous phenomenon of Chinese culture unto the plane of life on earth was born among the stars and begotten by the wonder their splendour and marvellously regulated movements awoke in the soul of the first dreamer on the loess soil of the Yellow River basin. The seasons in their changes gave him the assurance of unfailing order, "the sun and the moon brought him time." From this there came to him the vision of the sacredness of life, of the Divine without and within him, which made his conscience hear and answer the call for restraint and reverence. The prayer the great founders constantly repeated was:

"Let me be reverent. Be ye also reverent."

They felt there is no other foundation on which a culture can be built and not crumble at the first onslaught of adversity. Because they chose it and the generations that followed abided by their choice, their history flowed on continuously through the friction of 4,000 years. Dynasties, epitomizing as they do the characteristics of the many epochs traversed, will best explain and illustrate them to inquirers of the past.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY DYNASTIES

**D**YNASTIES are the milestones of Chinese history. The long-lived ones mark turns in the road, changes of scenery, the achievement of a special character and style.

Where the road ramifies into a bewilderment of tracks, blind alleys and mazes, extrication from which is a laborious process, short-lived dynasties occur in groups of three to five. They indicate periods of uncertainty, of loss of direction, of gropings after special character and style. At last out of the clash of conflicting tendencies, one will arise capable of carrying them all upward into the reconciliation of a wider synthesis, representing which the successful dynasty is borne along the passage of the centuries. But not for ever. The wish of 10,000 years of life for each emperor, though inscribed in golden characters on innumerable tablets and set up in every temple, was never fulfilled; the average duration of a dynasty fluctuates between two to 400 years. Only the three ancient dynasties lasted just twice as long, because in that embryonic stage of civilization change was looked upon not as something to be desired, but as something to be shunned and feared.

Therefore T'ang, founder of the Shang and supplanter of the Hsia dynasty, wrestled hard with his conscience, before he felt sure that the destruction of a legitimate ruler however evil harmonized with the will of Heaven. Later rectifiers of the order of succession felt no such qualms and during the anarchical times of short-lived dynasties, violent transfers of power from one family to another were the rule rather than the exception. Violent, because the *desire* for change which gradually replaces *fear* of change, lacked the safety-valve of periodic elections.

Yet election as it tends to be the most modern, seems to have been the most ancient method of obtaining a holder of supreme power, and in those small communities where each candidate's merits were known to every elector by actual performance not by verbal promises, election did mean selection.



It probably took the form of general acclamation at tribal gatherings.

As the man elected consolidated his power he was able to supersede the relatively wide right of election by this narrower privilege of himself appointing his successor (about 2300 B.C.).

Yao and Shun, the two model Sovereigns with whom the Classic of History opens, used this privilege and chose their successors, but, probably as a concession still necessary to placate the old holders of the right of election—not among their sons—only among their ablest ministers. Evidently the principle of heredity was not yet accepted. It was coming in, though.

On the death of Yü who, following Yao and Shun's examples, had given the succession to his minister I, the nobles left I and rendered homage to Yü's son Ch'i, saying: "The son of our Lord Yü that is our Prince."

Thus did Yü against his will become the founder of a dynasty. Ch'i in his turn was succeeded by his son (T'ai K'ang). He, however, sitting on the "throne like a log" and the principle of heredity still being too weak to maintain worthlessness, died deposed and exiled.

A regular conflict between heredity and the elective principle seems to have ensued. The one placed T'ai K'ang's brother and nephew successively on the throne, the other swept the latter aside and for thirty-nine years left the supreme power in the hands of a new man, Han Tcho. Yet the remembrance of Yü's glory was still too vivid for his descendants to remain forgotten and heredity, finally triumphant, enthroned Yü's great-great-grandson, Shao K'ang.

Apart from this stormy interlude and the immense achievements of its founder, the Hsia dynasty is singularly featureless. The great Han historian, Ssü-ma Ch'ien, reduces its history to the reiteration of two phrases: "His son the Emperor," Hsiang or Wang or whatever his name happened to be, "assumed power. He died."

Once the phrase is altered to "Power was given to Kong Kua, son of the Emperor Pu Kiang."

This is not a revival of the elective principle, only a re-assertion of heredity in the direct line which had been interrupted in favour of a brother.

Ssü-ma Ch'ien has far more to relate of another nameless, almost timeless dynasty, beginning with Huang Ti, Lord of the Yellow Earth, begotten by lightning, born on a mountain, a mighty pioneer, who planted

"the 100 kinds of herbs, cereals and trees, favoured the increase of birds, quadrupeds, insects and reptiles, established order for sun, moon

and stars and the tides of the sea, for earth, stones, metals and jade, sparing no toil to his heart, his vigour or limbs, regulating the use of water, fire, wood and all things whatsoever."

The first weaving of silk is attributed to his Empress, the invention of writing to one of his ministers. Even coinage and markets, carriages and the compass are said to have originated in his reign.

Evidently a great creative period, obscure and mysterious as creation always is, a period whose officials were the Flames, the Winged, the Clouds, which moved to the rhythm of hymns called: The Lakes, the Abyss, the six Glories; at one end hardening into history, at the other mellowing into myth and folk-lore whence Ssü-ma Chêng, Ssü-ma Ch'ien's eighth-century relative and commentator drew in vast and vacillating outlines a yet more ghostly dynasty whose originator Fu Hsi is worshipped as the "Brooding Breath" and the "Supreme Splendour." For to him a sacred horse rising out of the waves of the Yellow River brought the eight Trigrams revealing the future from observation of the present and remembrance of the past.

Of his successors one had the body of a serpent and the head of a man, another the body of a man and the head of an ox. The former melted the five coloured stones to repair the sky damaged by an enemy knocking his head against a mountain, the latter bent a piece of wood and made the first plough, wherefore he is honoured as the divine husbandman Shennung. Midst such strange beings, close to the time of the great separation of Heaven from Earth, along dim meres, where queens trod in the footprints left by gods and conceived heroic sons of Heaven, the first milestones of Chinese history are set. After legend, history; after creation, organization. The Yü Kung, the tribute of Yü, the harangue of Ch'i at Kan, Hung Fan, the all embracing Law or the great Plan, the three most authentic documents of the first dynasty, show this organizing spirit at work respectively on the economic, the administrative and the ethical side.

The Yü Kung in the manner of a Domesday book contains first a list of tribute of the roads and waterways by which it reached the capital; secondly, a geographical survey of the country in general; and thirdly, a rhythmic account of Yü's labours regulating the flow and overflow of marshes, lakes and rivers:

"The sea, the Tai Shan and the Hoai bound the Siu district.

"The Hoai and the I were confined to their channels; the hills cultivated. Ta Ye lake restricted within fixed limits, the eastern plain made arable."



"The soil is red, loamy and rich, grass and trees abound. Fields are in the second, taxes in the fifth rank. The tribute consists of earths of five colours, bright-plumed pheasants from the mountain-valleys of Yu, the solitary dryandras from the southern slopes of mount I and sonorous stones deposited on the banks of the Sze. Navigating on the Hoai and Sze one reaches the Ho."

The fact that districts far beyond the geographical boundaries of the Middle Kingdom are enumerated as tributaries, shows that these early Sons of Heaven were pontiffs rather than Emperors. As the Pope of Rome, whose physical dominion frequently did not extend beyond the Vatican, was yet able to collect Peter's Pence from the whole of Europe, so the sovereigns of the ancient dynasties by virtue of as widely recognized a spiritual leadership drew revenue from provinces over which they had no administrative control whatsoever. And even as the Papacy, notwithstanding its religious character, was armed with tremendous penalties, so there was nothing lamblike in the authority of the Son of Heaven. The Dragon with terrible eyes, fierce claws and threatening fangs was its well-selected symbol.

The harangue held by Yü's son Ch'i during his expedition against a rebel anathematizes disobedience with unmistakable vigour :

"Heigh ye leaders of the six armies, I have a speech to make to you. The Hoo Prince has violated the five primordial forces, flouted the three established orders of the day, the month and the year. Therefore Heaven breaks and destroys his mandate. I only carry out divinely appointed retribution.

"If you on the left fail in your duty on the left, you scorn my orders ;

"If you on the right fail in your duty on the right, you scorn my orders ;

"If you drivers guide my horses badly, you scorn my orders.

"You who obey I will reward before the Ancestor.

"You who disobey, I will slay before the Spirit of the Earth, yea, with all your offspring will I slay you."

The great Plan is the earliest extant codification of the intuitions of a great moral order in the human community linked up with and modelled on that of the Universe. Written in a mathematical shorthand which the great Yü read on the glistening back of a tortoise disporting itself in the river Lo, it could be called China's Magna Charta, because, though it concentrates the bestowal of rewards and punishments, and the receipt of taxes in the hands of the sovereign, it also safeguards the rights of the subject in the only really effective way, by insisting on none but the worthy holding power, and exercising

it only in strictest conformity with the laws of a Heaven, who rewards the just and smites the wicked.

Beginning with the five aggregates, water, fire, wood, metal, earth and man's five reactions to the outer world, demeanour, speech, sight, hearing, thinking, it makes food the first, the army the last of the eight functions of government and culminates in a hymn on the beauty of the royal road—"Wang Tao" which must be pursued "without selfish love or hatred, without deflections and partialities," for it is:

"broad and long,"  
"level and easy,"  
"right and straight,"

the changeless rule of Heaven.

For all that not many of the seventeen rulers of the Hsia dynasty walked on it, the temptation to spend the tribute, flowing so easily into the capital, on purely selfish magnificence proved too much already for Yü's grandson.

And the last of the line, Chieh Kuei, gave way to every single temptation inherent in power and many possessions. He built pavilions with walls inlaid with gems and ivory, also a subterranean palace and a tunnel to the river, perhaps with a view to escape from the troubles he saw coming and which he tried to repress by a savage violence that earned him the surname of the Inhuman.

The next dynasty, the Shang, later called the Yin, represents a conscious return to the morality of Yao and Shun, to the Wang Tao, the royal road of the great Plan. And because it was a reaction against luxury, drunkenness and violence, a touch of intolerance characterizes the wave of Puritanism which carried its founder T'ang (i.e. he who puts down cruelty and suppresses tyranny) to the throne.

Consequently the art of the era he inaugurated, was simple and stern; its style as revealed in what hymns and bronzes have survived, calm and austere. There occurred droughts, nomad incursions. The problems of adding a strong secular side to the pontifical prerogatives of the Son of Heaven, and of spreading and consolidating what had by then grown into a distinct civilization, were arduous to solve.

Discipline and effort were urgently needed. Yet six times the dynasty "became perverted," five times it shifted its residence, which suggests unstable conditions. Nevertheless, it endured 600 years, and it could have lasted longer if Chou Hsin with that folly characteristic of all rulers lacking the requisite moral restraint, had not himself undermined the foundations of



its strength, still the grave simplicity by which his ancestor had earned the heavenly mandate. We can judge of how extreme that simplicity was, by the fact that Chou Hsin's ivory chopsticks were condemned as outrageous luxuriousness which could not but herald disaster. True enough the gorgeous Stag Tower, on which he lavished untold wealth, became the scene of his doom, when after the defeat of his army he fled to its lofty terraces, "decked himself in his jewelled robes, leapt into the flames and perished."

The man who supplanted him was Wu, Lord of the fief of Chou (in Shensi). He embodied the sterling qualities of colonials, being descended from Ch'i, minister of agriculture under Shun, whose son trekked from the Middle Kingdom to what was then the Far West.

Wu's father, Ch'ang, Warden of the Western Marches (later canonized as Wen Wang), headed the opposition provoked by Chou Hsin's cruelty. For this he was cast into prison where he probably would have died, if his friends had not contrived to put the tyrant into a good humour by presenting him with a beautiful concubine and some excellent horses. Perhaps, too, Chou Hsin thought the Warden was sufficiently cowed and that he had nothing more to fear.

Indeed, when several years after Ch'ang's death, his son Wu rose up as his avenger, the position of legitimate royalty was still so strong, the 4,000 war-chariots of the rebels had to face no less than 700,000 men. It was only Chou Hsin's individual unpopularity that lost him the throne.

The establishment of a new dynasty, the Chous, meant a change of persons rather than of principles.

With only a few superficial alterations such as changing the court colour from white to red and the beginning of the year from the twelfth to the eleventh month, it took over all the institutions and fashions of its predecessor.

There is the same insistence on lofty morals, the same austerity of style, the same predilection for jade and bronze, the same forms and objects of worship only with a slight shifting of the accent from the Spirits of the Soil to those of the Ancestors in consequence of the family having become the paramount social and political unit. Even the first Shang's habit of having moral precepts inscribed wherever he could not fail to see them was copied by the first Chou.

Thus on his platters and cups Wu Wang could read :

"Drink only to fortify your body ; eat only to preserve your life. Scorn a quantity of dishes. Prevent their being set before you."

On the pillars of his hall :

- " Say not : ' How can they fall ? '   
That would be the beginning of the end."   
" Say not : ' How can they be damaged ? '   
That is courting disaster."   
" Say not : ' How could they get defiled ? '   
That would be nearing the abyss."

On his stick :

- " How dangerous it is to hate and give way to anger."   
" How far violent passions lead from the right way."   
" How readily the rich and the mighty forsake justice."

On his sword :

- " Drawn in a just cause, a blessing ; in an unjust one, a curse."

On the windows :

- " Serve Heaven in humility and fear—   
No dawn omit to worship Him."

Change of direction only occurred towards the middle of the dynasty, when owing to the fact that geographical causes placed colonial expansion into the hands of the wardens of the marches, the disproportion between the size and resources of what was literally the Middle Kingdom, the territory under the immediate control of the Son of Heaven, and the surrounding feudal states steadily increased in favour of the latter. Consequently the economic, political, finally even the intellectual and moral influence once concentrated in the capital got dispersed among a number of courts at first princely or ducal, from the fourth century (325 B.C.) frankly royal, finally the most powerful, actually imperial.

The Yü Kung became ancient history. Tribute of furs, silks, metals, no longer floated down far-reaching rivers to the Palace residence of the Son of Heaven. It was caught up on the way by the great nobles whom his nimbus had ceased to impress. In the welter of economic, political and personal rivalries which alone aroused their interest he could play no part half as effective as their own.

As in all periods of rapid material expansion, moral considerations being found irksome, quietly dropped out of fashion, though once their urgency had made the black-haired people acclaim Yao and Shun and the founders of the three ancient dynasties as their divinely appointed masters.

Faith is the foundation of all power. That failing the later Chous, their material resources ebbing away also, what



could they do but shrink to shadows, bloodless wraiths vaguely silhouetted against a tempestuous background, they only haunted but had ceased to inhabit as a vital force. Signs of the coming change show fairly early. A great-grandson of Wu Wang already fell a victim to the desire of outlying districts to escape imperial vigilance.

On his way back from a journey South, he was drowned crossing a river, having been treacherously given a boat, the planks of which were only held together with glue.

Mu Wang, his son, spent the fifty years of his reign in strenuous efforts to break through the ring of independent states closing round the Middle Kingdom. In his chariot drawn by eight horses, doing 1,000 li a day, he dashed through the whole Empire to its most distant boundaries and further. Not always with good results.

From an expedition against the northern Dog barbarians he only brought back four white wolves, four white stags and the tribe's permanent ill-will.

Yet the speed and extent of his travels made such an impression on popular imagination, they were prolonged into Dreamland, where blue birds nest, Jade Palaces glitter on the Lake of Gems and the radiant Si Wang Mu, Queen of the West, tends the peach-trees of immortality blossoming once only in 3,000 years. Artists fell in love with this subject; painted it again and again. Some modern critics, as credulous as any of the ancient weavers of romance, identify Si Wang Mu with the Queen of Sheba. Others, rushing to the opposite extreme, deny her existence altogether.

But Mu Wang's reality admits of no doubt. His name is famous not only for his travels but for his reforms in the administration of justice.

"Thinking with awe about retribution, because its object is to promote virtue, and wishing to decide cases with compassion and reverence," he introduced a system of fines to supplement or even supplant the five ruthless mutilations till then the only available form of punishment.

Nevertheless, under his grandson I, there was much discontent, venting itself in lampoons.

To I's grandson, Li Wang, such freedom of opinions swelled into a boggy which had to be tracked down and extirpated at all costs. Not only had he those killed who openly criticized his government, but he also employed a thought-reading witch to detect unuttered treason. Anyone she accused was executed without further inquiry. Terror fell on the people and a great silence. Li Wang rejoiced. Had he not strangled discontent?

But he had merely driven it from men's tongues, where it was comparatively harmless, into their heart blood, where it slowly festered into an explosive and one day flamed up and smoked him out of his palace into lifelong exile.

The leaders of the revolt carried on the government under the name and in the spirit of General Harmony. On Li's death they made his son Hsüan King; whose reign on the whole continued this harmonious progress on the great royal road.

But Hsüan's son Yu again strayed away from it, lured on by a woman, Pao Sze. She was of such demoniac charm, legend spoke of her as the offspring of dragon foam preserved for centuries in a mysterious casket. She never smiled. Yu Wang vainly exhausted every device to make her. Now in case of invasions it was the custom to kindle huge beacon fires fed with wolf bones, the smoke of which towered high and dark, visible for miles. Simultaneously the roll of immense drums was sent thundering from hill to hill, that distant contingents should hasten to the rescue.

One day while sojourning at his hunting palace of Li Shan, Yu Wang conceived the idea of setting this excitement in motion merely for fun. When the lords arriving full tilt with their levies realized they had been disturbed for nothing, they looked so discomfited that the woman who could not smile, burst into peals of laughter. Yu Wang was delighted—for the time being. He forgot he had already roused the deadly enmity of one of the most powerful of these nobles, his father-in-law, the Marquis Chen, by degrading his daughter and her son the heir-presumptive, for the sake of Pao Sze and her child.

The Marquis appealed to the Western Jung barbarians to avenge this insult. They swept in. Drum-taps thundered, beacon fires flared, but no help came. The nobles would not risk getting fooled a second time. Unaided, the King could not resist the invaders. They slew him at the foot of Li Shan, and carried away much treasure, also Pao Sze. It is not related whether she ever laughed again.

The Marquis put his royal grandson Ping Wang on the throne, a throne so threatened by this barbarian irruption, the capital was moved further east to Lo yang. Which admission of weakness ruined imperial prestige.

A Son of Heaven was expected to hold barbarians in admiring awe by the holiness of his rule, not to run away from them in abject fear.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FALL OF THE CHOUS AND THE RISE OF THE CH'INS

FROM that day "the house of Chou declined; the nobles used their power to oppress the weak. Of the growing states the strongest exercised supremacy."

The age of phantom Sons of Heaven sets in. They bear strange names—

the Laborious,

the Unsuccessful,

the Trembling,

the Kind—though the latter absorbed a private garden into his hunting-park, which caused him to be driven forth and replaced by his uncle. But he, too, had enemies, who killed him, and the stealer of gardens returned, no doubt in so chastened a mood he *did* earn the surname of Kind.

One of these phantoms must have known Lao Tzŭ, who with all the fire of his great thoughts smouldering in him was for many years keeper of the archives at Lo yang.

Another or perhaps the same Ching Wang may have spoken to K'ung Tzŭ who visited the capital about 500, and was so deeply impressed by its majesty he believed peace and justice could be restored to the faction-ridden country by loyal support of the Chous. It was not to be. Three centuries later these, far from having recovered any of their original strength, had slipped down so utterly into dotage and impotence, that Mêng Tzŭ, though an ardent follower of K'ung Tzŭ, had to differ from him on this point and seek the ideal Son of Heaven elsewhere, somewhere among the nobles who had taken the sunshine from the drooping banners of the Chous. Yet only a few isolated thinkers like him had the vision to discern in the imperial office the moral force which only needed grafting into a healthy stem to reintegrate the righteous and therefore peaceful and prosperous Middle Kingdom of old.

The majority swimming with the full tide of separatism and decentralization, at best felt only a scornful pity for this fossilized

stump of imperial greatness and through all the restlessness of the period of the warring states suffered the descendant of the great Chous to continue to make the prescribed number of genuflexions before the right altars at the appointed times and seasons and between while to wander through palaces grown too large, gazing somewhat aimlessly at the portraits of his predecessors Yao and Shun, Chieh Kuei and Chou Hsin, neither whose virtues nor whose vices he had the means to copy.

Once indeed while he still manifested some stir of independence they attacked him forcibly—successfully too. He was called Huan, and fled from the battle-field an arrow-wound in his shoulder. At which the rebel duke felt ashamed, “knelt down and comforted the poor bleeding Son of Heaven.”

Another time (in 632), Hsiang Wang being on the throne, he was summoned to the great congress, which by periodic meetings tried to keep the relations between the habitually warring states in some sort of order.

This was disrespectful, but at least showed that the friendship of the Chous was still considered worth courting.

Then even that remnant of regard ended, and the legitimate dynasty was remembered merely as the owner of ancient treasures, well worth looting, especially the nine Tripods cast under the great Yü, possession of which symbolized imperial suzerainty, and imperial suzerainty after an orgy of centrifugal anarchy had again entered the field of practical politics. For about a century (between 685–591) it crystallized into the selection from among the most powerful rulers of a Lord Protector, endowed with a certain amount of authority and invested by the Son of Heaven with imposing insignia,

“a state chariot, a red bow with a 100 and a black bow with a 1,000 arrows, a jar of spiced wine, a jade handled cup, 300 soldiers ardent as tigers.”

In spite of which, on the death of the fifth protector, the experiment ended.

Then K'ung Tzŭ quickened this desire for centralization into a moral fervour which aimed at re-establishing the old unity by a revival of the old virtues and for the benefit of all. The leading rulers, however, coarsened this great conception into ambitious schemes for imposing unity by force and only for their own material profit.

Ambition and material profit were indeed the strongest of the many passions surging in those full-blooded creatures with “the eyes of wasps and the heart of wolves,” a fierce, turbulent



crowd who made their feeble overlord appear like a poor domestic fowl that has hatched a brood of hawks and eagles. In sables and embroidered robes or in cuirasses of rhinoceros-hide, on bronze-studded chariots, swords clattering from the girdles on which their wiser forefathers wore gently tinkling jade, many a time an iron club treacherously hidden in the folds of their long sleeves, they lorded it in gorgeous palaces, laid out deer-parks, artificial lakes, pavilions, pleasure-grounds, split up the country into a thousand enmities by high walls and custom barriers, strong armies and navies and monopolies, levied exorbitant taxes, cowed even the mutter of revolt by wholesale quarterings and brandings, loved and hated without restraint, quaffed enormous tankards, devoured whole legs of uncooked pork at one repast, hunted till half their beaters died of cold, trained their hounds to steal and strangle, feasted dreaded rivals to get them so drunk they could be murdered with impunity, exterminated their entire family, desecrated their ancestral graves, boiled unpopular ministers alive, poisoned inconvenient relatives, dashed the brains and teeth of inattentive servants out against the pillars of their halls, warred and sparred their fill while luck lasted, and when it turned against them, fell on their swords, cut their throats or drank the poison sent them by an angry master with an astonishing unconcern, explicable only in such non-moral beings, by an immense sense of personal dignity, an irresistible tendency towards a ritual moulding of behaviour. On this point the fervent morality of calmer days otherwise hibernating in ancient books and music known only to a few scholars, continued as a living force among the multitude of active men.

Not that scholars were inactive. Some indeed, like Lao Tzŭ, sick of the prevailing immorality, withdrew into solitude and distance. But others, like K'ung Fu Tzŭ and Mêng Tzŭ, never wearied in their efforts to control political action by the weight of their counsels. Yet others could be called the journalists of their day, vocalizing and therefore colouring public opinion, and in the general game of grab weaving schemes of defence or spoliation, starting or stopping wars under cover of the public interest, but in reality in the interest of whichever power or group of powers paid them most.

They were the diplomatic agents between the disunited states of China, after about 480 reduced to seven, and varying considerably in size, wealth and civilization beneath the universal and in some cases merely superficial layer of Chinese culture.

Chi, the one furthest East, comprising Lu, the native state of K'ung Tzŭ, K'ung Chi his grandson, and Mêng Tzŭ his ablest

interpreter, remained the most active centre of that culture, for here study rusted as little as swords elsewhere.

Possibly the very hopelessness of outward circumstances drove the energy of the righteous inwards, and condensed it there into thoughts of such incomparable depth, clarity and beauty, they make the latter Chou period for all its failings one of the summits of human history. There were schools and academies attached to most of the courts. Even the border-states like Ch'in, Chao and Yen could boast of some, though, as they derived their power from colonial expansion, they suffered from the usual consequences of intermingling with barbarians, namely chronic frontier warfare, confusion of moral standards, coarsening of manners, assumed reverence but actual repugnance for art and learning.

Lost in the midst of these, since 441, weakened by division into an eastern Royal and a western ducal line, the Chous came to be reduced to thirty-six towns and 30,000 subjects. Their last Son of Heaven hoped to arrest the downward slide by joining one of the many alliances at one time known as the perpendicular (North and South) and the horizontal (East and West) confederations by which the warring states pretended to maintain that strange chimera of all warring states, balance of power.

This, after weary years of above and underground struggle, tilted definitely in favour of the Far West. For in its fertile uplands a tremendous condensation of military and economic power had taken place under the leadership of the energetic house of Ch'in, supported by a succession of skilful ministers, all relentlessly pursuing a long range policy of material expansion.

Its luck began in 822, when Chung of Ch'in, having defeated the Jungs, was created warden of the Western Marches. It was consolidated in 771, when Ping Wang, fleeing to Lo yang, the Duke Siang of Ch'in protected his rear against the same barbarians and was rewarded by the gift of the district round Mount Ki and the upper valley of the Wei ensconced behind difficult passes, whence three and a half centuries before the Chous had sallied forth to end a dynasty fallen from grace. Possibly remembrance of this kindled a similar ambition in the Dukes of Ch'in, but methods, motives and circumstances were very different. Their fight for the Dragon Throne did not lie so much with its trembling occupant as with the other aspirants to its dormant splendours, and with the champions of local independence.

The struggle blazed its trail of murderous wars and interludes of peace, poisoned by war passions treacherously prolonged



into it, across four entire centuries, rising towards the finish in terrific crescendos to utmost violence of slaughter.

In 364	the number of heads cut amounted to	60,000
In 308	" " " " " "	to 80,000
In 295	" " " " " "	to 240,000
In 275-4	" " " " " "	to 80,000
In 264	" " " " " "	to 200,000
In 260	" " " " " "	to 450,000
In 256	" " " " " "	to 130,000
Total		<u>1,240,000</u>

That is the butcher's bill the people had to pay in kind for their leaders' ambition to bring centralization about by force, and for the benefit of one state only.

The throne of Ch'in, like that of all predatory imperialists, was literally a calvary, a place of skulls. Its head-hunting was so unusually frank, because its soldiers were paid cash down for every head they brought in. This treble appeal to cupidity, courage and quarrelsomeness joined to a fierce but highly efficient discipline, welded the Ch'in army into a weapon before which the clumsier and more loosely organized levies of the other states dissolved into a rabble of terrified fugitives.

Barbarians constantly pressing on most of its frontiers never let Ch'in forget the need of keeping its arrows sharp and its bows well strung, besides providing a reservoir whence an almost unlimited supply of horse and man-power could be drawn. Further, the Ch'in rulers, realizing that the bitterness of discipline will not be tolerated long unless coated over by the sugar of good pay and at least prospective promotion, took every measure to increase the wealth of the country and to direct its main flow into the coffers of the state.

Extensive irrigation works brought four million acres under the plough and attracted settlers. The patriarchal Tsing Tien (well-field) System which grouped eight families in eight farmsteads around a common well and fostered genuine democracy by ensuring equal subsistence to all cultivators, allowing the state only a tithe payable in kind, was definitely abolished about 350. Henceforth land could be sold freely and bought in unlimited quantities regardless of the fate of the expropriated farmers.

The able-bodied among these were gathered up into the army or in industrial settlements, where they had to produce the goods needed by a voracious state and an expanding commerce. Taxes also had to be paid in money so as to hasten the volatilization of land-values and their recondensation in the

hands of the few, who then bribed their way into office and controlled the policy of the country.

Prisoners, idlers and vagabonds were condemned to forced labour with which the great military roads, forts, arsenals, yamens and palaces, all the pomp and circumstance of aspiring imperialism could be constructed at small cost.

This, giving the state a direct interest in convict labour, stimulated its zeal for the detection and manufacture of criminals. Groups of ten families were formed, the members of which were held responsible for each other's good behaviour. Sheltering a malefactor, they ran the risk of having to share his punishment, never a light one; handing him over to the authorities, they received as liberal a reward as for the head of an enemy.

While the people were encouraged to spy on and denounce each other, comment on government action was sternly discountenanced, even praise getting silenced by exile.

The swift unquestioning obedience of automata became the only safe course. No wonder that after 100 years of such a system, mental and moral stagnation had reached the pitch which permitted the burning of the books and the massacre of scholars. But on the material plane Ch'in was prosperous and the happy hunting-ground for the cosmopolitan crowd of fortune-seekers who have a natural affinity for expanding empires.

Once indeed the natives rose up against these foreigners and clamoured for their eviction. The latter, however, were able to convince the King that their services increased his wealth and if transferred elsewhere might prove a serious danger. So he allowed them to stay and even took some into his inner councils.

The ministers who prepared Ch'in's final triumph were mostly natives of other states. The most famous, Lü Pu-wei, contrived by all the weapons of warfare, including a liberal use of the mud- and blood-stained gold of propaganda to sow dissension in the ranks of the enemy, to shatter the league formed against Ch'in and incidentally to wipe out the Chous. In 256 Nan Wang, the last Son of Heaven of that Dynasty, had to kneel in the dust before the "Wild Beast of the West" and confess himself a worthless worm that should feel honoured to be trodden upon by his Conqueror. But he only kicked it aside. It was not worth killing and Nan Wang crawled away into exile and obscurity, was called the childless and died soon after.

There was a Duke of Chou who preserved his independence another six years. Then he also disappeared inside the big jaws of Ch'in, looming in ever sharper outlines as the predestined



restorer of ancient imperial unity. Only its record was so evil, that opposition held out another thirty years.

One sage expressed what thousands thought, when he said :

“ If Ch'in which has spurned all rites and justice, which measures merit by the number of cut heads, should ever acquire imperial rule I, Lu Chung lien will cast myself into the Eastern Sea, for I never will consent to become his subject.”

But the spirit of the times, rough, rapacious, unrestrained, favoured a strong, unscrupulous, centralized power. None other could curb the welter of contending greeds with the celerity which the bulk of the people, sick of warfare, impatiently desired. A super-monster was needed to devour the minor monsters whose perennial intrigues and vendettas had harried the country to exhaustion. So the “ Wild Beast of the West ” came to tower victoriously over the prostrate bodies of its rivals, a huge feline, one paw crushing the South, the other the East, its tail lashing the northern barbarians, its jaws rending the flesh and crunching the bones of the centre. Near its lair arose a new milestone on the long road of Chinese history. On it was written with a pomp contrasting strangely with the modesty of the Chous, who only called themselves Wang King, “ Shih Huang Ti,” “ First Sovereign Lord,” the full connotation of the characters used including the idea of a semi-divine supremacy and majesty. It was the title which Chêng, king of Ch'in, assumed in 221, because, as he said, his virtues equalled those of the three ancient Sovereigns, of whom Fu Hsi was one, and his achievements those of the five Divine Lords beginning with the Great Lord of the Yellow Earth. Indeed, according to his own estimation, he had eclipsed the greatness of antiquity, for he had unified the Empire to a degree antiquity never had been able to attain.

To this goal which his family had pursued for generations against the phantom Chous and the six very real states, he had hacked his way by a succession of swift hammer-strokes, conquering Han in 230, Chao in 228, Wei in 225, Ch'u in 224, Yen in 222, Ch'i in 221.

The annals of those eleven years hardly register anything beyond immense levies of soldiers, battles, sieges, the capture of kings, severe famines among the people. He was thirty-nine when he made Chien of Ch'i, the last ruler who attempted to maintain independence, perish of hunger among the pines and yew-trees of a graveyard. In this ruthless manner he completed his internal conquests and could settle down to enjoying what of their fruit did not prove wormwood and ashes.

Wei Liao, a politician, whom he had pressed into his service, describes him at the age of twenty-nine as

“a man with a prominent nose, large eyes, the breast of a bird of prey, the voice of a jackal, the heart of a tiger, the benevolence of a wolf, one who while in difficulties would flatter men, but devour them the moment he had reached his goal.”

Which proved true enough, wars and the birth of new institutions inevitably breeding the tiger-jackal type of mind. Nor had he been brought up in model surroundings.

His mother, a native of Chao, began her career as a singing girl and concubine of Lü Pu-wei, at that time one of those wealthy merchants deeply interested in politics and backing centralization as conducive to improved trade.

He was an important person in Han Tan, the capital of Chao, to which Chao Hsiang, King of Ch'in had sent his grandson I-jen as a hostage. Lü Pu-wei, correctly forecasting the winner, thought he could further his own interests best by promoting those of this young prince I-jen. Consequently he helped to finance him, he gave him his beautiful concubine to wife, he contrived to get him adopted by the childless chief-consort of the heir-apparent as the first step towards securing his succession to the throne. This he did obtain in 250 on his father Hsiao Wen's death following close upon that of his grandfather Chao Hsiang.

This King, as the destroyer of the Chous, was the first to arrogate to the Ch'ins the Son of Heaven's prerogative of sacrificing to the Lord on high. When he did so in 253 he was not conducting a religious service as much as making a political demonstration, definitely setting up his house as the one round which all champions of the idea of unification henceforth were to rally.

His great-grandson Chêng, when he made this idea a tremendous reality, remembered the debt he owed Chao Hsiang and declared he only triumphed, because he always put his trust in the divine influence emanating from the ancestral temple. What he owed his father was the support of Lü Pu-wei, without whose shrewd counsels and widespread influence Ch'in's military victories would have lacked the requisite permanence and cohesion.

Chêng was only thirteen when his father died. Therefore his mother and Lü Pu-wei exercised a kind of regency. To silence the gossip which whispered that they remembered too well she had once been his concubine, Lü Pu-wei disguised a handsome youth, Lao Ai, as an eunuch, and introduced him into her palace.



Lao Ai soon acquired power, rank and wealth, but, realizing that the means by which he obtained them did not bear looking into, he organized a rebellion the moment the young King was old enough to rule alone. It failed completely. The heads of all the rebels as well as those of all their clients and relations were paraded about on long poles, while the poor bodies to which they had once belonged were torn to bits by chariots. The enraged King banished his mother the indiscreet Queen-Dowager to the distant palace of Fuyang at Yong. That, however, meant such a falling away from the dictates of filial piety, public opinion growled indignant protests. And he still had to humour public opinion. So the exile did not last long, and he allowed the Queen-Dowager to return to the palace in the capital, Hsien Yang.

Shortly before a royal prince, his younger brother, Chêng Kiao, had fomented a revolt among the troops he was commanding. That attempt also missed fire and ended in a number of heads parting company from the bodies of their owners. Chêng Kiao was ordered by his brother to withdraw himself as swiftly as possible to the nether world. Family life in the palace of Hsien Yang does not seem to have been overburdened with affection. Lü Pu-wei was the next to come under suspicion. Lest worse befall he put an end to his interesting life by poison (235). Probably the King, brimming over with the energy of youth, had grown impatient of the old man's influence, the more so as among the latter's clients he had found a counsellor after his own heart, Li Ssü.

This ambitious climber was a native of Ch'u and in a marked degree possessed the southerner's quickness of brain and tendency to despotic radicalism. Though educated in a school of philosophy derived from K'ung Tzū, personal vanity led him to think his own ideas, however crude, vastly superior to any others, however searchingly tested by age-long experience. His consequent intolerance of criticism, his passion for root and branch reforms turned the unification of the separate states, to which events and men had been tending for years, into a violent break with the past and made the hurricane breath of revolution blow about the newly-erected milestone. Lust of destruction, contempt of the old, craze for change, boundlessness of schemes, impatience and brutality in their execution, reckless territorial rearrangements, the wiping out of inherited wealth and power, the theoretical enfranchisement and practical exploitation of the masses, the substitution of arbitrary violence for the quiet rule by law and precedent, the shattering through fear of every stir of opposition, the least freedom of speech, thought or action,

all these characteristics of revolutions were wantonly dragged in, in defiance of the advice of wiser ministers, depriving the Ch'in Empire of that arterial connexion with old-established customs which alone ensures permanence to any fresh institution grafted upon them, recklessly sacrificing its future to childish glee in an immediate display of a brand-new, wholly superficial and therefore wholly untenable uniformity. When the last representative of separatism had sunk down, starved and dead, in the shadow of graveyard trees, and the champion of unity had proclaimed himself Sovereign Lord in the splendour of magnificent banqueting halls, the main question to be settled was, by what methods and in what spirit the newly acquired territories were to be ruled. It is a question every conqueror has to answer the moment the last dish of the triumphal feast is cleared away and the hunger of the subdued for peace and justice in its turn demands to be fed. Whether in his answer he votes for a continuation of the craft and violence suited to war or for the adoption of the gentleness and equity needed for genuine pacification ultimately decides the further question as to whether his posterity shall inherit or lose his conquests.

The new monarch in the full flush of victory felt no doubt at all about having fixed the Empire in the permanent possession of his house and expressly called himself Shih (first) Huang Ti for his descendants to be known as the second, third and on to the hundredth or thousandth Sovereign Lord of the Ch'in Dynasty in regular numerical succession through endless centuries. That the Ch'ins never got beyond the second was because the first Emperor decided for the party of impatient violence led by Li Ssü as against the party of conciliation and slow change led by Wang Kuan, and the majority of scholars, clearly representing the wishes of the conquered as well as the most practical possibilities of the situation.

Both parties clashed immediately and fundamentally on the degree of centralization that was to be introduced, Wang Kuan advocating a minimum, Li Ssü a maximum. The former contended that the Emperor should delegate his authority over very distant provinces to trusty relations in order to be sure of support in case of trouble and to overcome the very great difficulty of adequately governing an immense Empire from one centre. Li Ssü, on the other hand, maintained that the pitiful weakness of the last Chous was the direct result of such delegation, and that a return to it would reopen the war chaos from which they had just only escaped.

In a measure Shih Huang Ti certainly did overcome the geographical obstacles to centralization. Immense roads,



avenues fifty feet wide slashed huge rifts into the seclusion of separatist states. Watch-towers, massive, lofty, strongly guarded, flashed vigilance and defiance across external frontiers and along local boundaries. With incredible energy he travelled from one end of his Empire to the other, and hammered the knowledge of his existence into the consciousness of his new subjects by engraving enormous slabs of stone or bronze with panegyrics of his achievements on every holy mountain he ascended, like the T'ai Shan, on every hallowed spot he visited, like the tomb of the Great Yü :

"The Sovereign Lord in watchful exercise of his dominion  
Has made and determined lucid laws,  
He for the first time has united all under Heaven,  
There is none who does not submit and obey."

"The Holiness embodied in the Sovereign Lord  
In due course of time attends to all matters,  
Alien customs he has improved and corrected,  
He has regulated the waters, delimited the soil."

"Full of solicitude for the Black Heads, he pities,  
Neither morning nor evening does he relax ;  
Before dawn he arises, goes to rest late at night,  
He has established what will enduringly profit."

"Endlessly progress will be continued,  
Reverently accept the orders he issues,  
With increasing diligence observe them for ever.  
Future generations must conform nor change one iota."

"The six Kings were cruel and followed evil propensities,  
They relied on force,  
They set arms in motion,  
They bred calamities and distress."

"The Sovereign Lord pitied the multitude,  
Therefore he levied soldiers of vengeance,  
His military ardour leapt up in its might,  
His justice and power punished with death."

"In the boiling cauldron he destroyed the brutal and cruel,  
Broilers and brigands were slain and wiped out,  
He overthrew and destroyed ramparts and citadels,  
Opened passages thro' the barriers of streams."

"The Sovereign Lord has displayed his glory,  
His virtue absorbed the allied nobles.  
He first established universal calm,  
His wisdom and virtue are extensive and deep."

"He has suppressed uncertainty and fixed legislation :  
All know the things they have to avoid.  
He has removed error ; established order ;  
Everything conforms unto his plans."

"In all places lit by the sun and the moon,  
As far as chariots and vessels move.  
All fulfill their destiny unto the end;  
None are displeased."

"The four quarters he pacified, regulated the length and breadth of  
the realm,  
For eternity he erected a model of justice.  
How great this achievement!  
Throughout the Universe and the Imperial Dominion his wise counsels  
are acclaimed and received."

If his subjects failed to be convinced by the rhetoric of these inscriptions proclaiming the virtues of Ch'in and the vices of its enemies to boundless skies above the cloud-banks of T'ai Shan, to starlit ocean distances from foam-washed cliffs, to crowded streets round gateways left standing as a trophy of the walls he had thrown down, then there were other grimmer ways of bringing the reality of the new imperial power home to their understanding.

With a grip of steel he seized on men and things, moved them and moulded them according to his needs, desires and caprices.

Scorning the old historical lines of demarcation, he cut up the empire into thirty-six shires subdivided into departments, administered by a sheriff, a military governor and above these an inspector-general. His choice of thirty-six, the square of six his fate number, was connected with his belief that the Ch'ins, the conquerors of the Chous, rulers by the virtue of fire, must from mystic necessity rule by the virtue of water, the element that destroys fire. Now water belongs to the Yin principle of the Universe and this governs the even, divisible numbers like six, and black is its typical colour. Therefore black was used for Court robes, ensigns and banners, the people were called the Black Heads, six became the leading number, tallies were six inches, chariots six feet long, drawn by six horses and so on. Already in 221 a proclamation engraved on tablets of black granite informed all and sundry whom it might concern that henceforth only one standard of weights and measures could be used in pursuance of a new "law that must be obeyed by all."

Indeed Shih Huang Ti's subjects had to do much obeying. Neither their wishes nor their habits were ever taken into account. Not content with compelling them to give up the variety of measures to which they were accustomed, he imposed on them a new and uniform system of writing, known as the Lesser Seal, championed and possibly actually invented by Li Ssü. Vigorously he churned them about through the length



and breadth of these thirty-six, later on forty, shires with their unknown names and unwonted regulations, overpowering their natural inertia with the demoniac mobility that possessed him himself; kneaded them into alert bodies of government officials hurrying about eagerly submissive to make his orders penetrate everywhere, drummed them together into well-disciplined armies to secure or enlarge far-away frontiers; drove them together into labour corps to construct his roads and his bridges, into masses of convicts dragging the clank of their chains to wherever gigantic building went on for public use or dynastic splendour, into herds of peasants torn from their homes and transplanted to fresh lands to develop new wealth for those in power or merely to satisfy some imperial caprice. And all this on a staggering scale. He could not conceive a moderate one.

In 219, having taken a fancy to the terraced cliffs of Lang Ya on the Southern coast of Shantung, 30,000 entire families were hurried to it. In 210 a similar number was marched off to the northernmost banks of the Yellow River because an oracle had foretold that transplantation would bring luck that year.

Fifty thousand were made to trek to Shensi in 212. No less than 150,000 were deported from their homes and compelled to settle in Hsien Yang in 221, immediately on his assumption of the imperial title. These were not peasants, but the rich and influential of the conquered states, thus unceremoniously moved about to deprive local patriotism of its natural leaders. Local patriotism, however, was tenacious and could count on supporters not only among the nobility of the former states, but also among the learned not specially attached to any one territory, yet too keenly alive to the value of historical tradition not to be strongly opposed to precipitate breaks with it.

They specially resented violent departures from the moral examples set by the great kings, or from the standard of right conduct taught by the sages of old and handed down in writings hallowed with age, sacred with intrinsic value. The faith these scholars stood for was the one that runs like a golden thread through the ancient writings, the faith in the innate goodness of the human heart. Let that heart but remain unsullied, let rulers but endeavour to be like Yao, "grave, enlightened and profound," or like Shun "wise, mild, reverend and utterly sincere," governing the people with benevolent solicitude, with justice ever tempered with mercy, and confusions, crimes and discords would vanish of their own accord.

To Li Ssü all this was anathema. His master Hsiün K'uang had taught him that man's nature is evil and needs external

discipline by instruction and above all by a lively fear of punishment not merely to keep it good, as K'ung Tzŭ's school maintained, but to make it good, goodness being a wholly artificial product. This theory, in itself as tenable as the opposite one, had become dangerous because contemporary politicians used it for justifying their atrociously cruel methods of enforcing obedience to their innovations, much as modern conquerors and captains of industry coined the theory of backward races and low standards of living to trick out their voracious colonial expansions and commercial exploitations with sweet-scented garlands of philanthropy.

Shih Huang Ti was entirely of Li Ssŭ's way of thinking and hated the followers of K'ung Tzŭ's school of learning with all the spite of a bad conscience. True enough, their fearless championship of the cause of unity had prepared the way for his triumph, only the kind of empire they dreamed of differed from his in almost every essential. Their model Emperors too, Yao, Shun, Yü, T'ang, were distinctly objectionable with their austere virtue, their kindness and humility constantly putting his brutal self-assertion, his passionate vanity to shame. Once already in 219 on one of his progresses south of the Yangtze, he had given rein to his spleen against them. On his way back from a hill temple dedicated to a prince Hsiang, he was overtaken by a terrific storm and almost prevented from crossing the river. He inquired what God this prince might be who dared raise tempests against the first Sovereign Lord. Being told the daughters of Yao, wives to Shun, lay buried on that hill, he flew into a great rage, cursed the mountain and gave orders for 3,000 convicts to cut down every tree that grew on it and then daub it over with red, the colour of prison clothes. These impertinent spirits of the dead should be taught who was master now on the earth, no longer theirs.

Six years later, in 213, his trusted Li Ssŭ showed him how at a single blow he could lay the shades of the past, take the sting out of the detested scholars, permanently cripple local patriotism and whip the process of unification up to the break-neck speed of his own impatience. All that needed doing was to deprive these over-virtuous scholars of the books which provided them with an irrefutable court of appeal to the ancient standards of righteousness and to rob local patriots of their strongest rallying point, live remembrance of their history, by making a bonfire of all local records.

When on the occasion of a festival the spokesman of the party of moderation and morality again ventured to broach the question of bestowing fiefs on the Emperor's sons and brothers,



as had been done by previous dynasties, Li Ssü's hatred of "scholars too stupid to understand Shih Huang Ti's everlasting merit, too hide-bound in their love of antiquity to appreciate the present," flared out in a speech of extreme violence culminating in the following monstrous proposals:

"Let all official records except those of Ch'in be burnt. Except the officially recognized men of learning let no one be allowed to possess either the Shih Ching or the Shu Ching or the Discourses of the 100 schools (of philosophy). These books must be handed over to the local civil and military authorities to be burnt. All those daring to hold discussions among themselves about the Shih Ching and the Shu Ching shall have their corpses exposed in the market-place. Let those who appeal to antiquity in order to abuse the present be slain with their entire kindred. Let officials who connive at any breach of this law incur the same punishment. Let those who fail to get their proscribed books burnt within thirty-one days of the proclaiming of this edict be branded and transported with shaven heads, an iron ring round their neck to the frontier to labour for 4 years on the building of the Great Wall. Books on medicine, divination, husbandry to be exempted. As to those wishing to study laws and ordinances, let them take officials as their teachers."

Li Ssü's proposals became law. An immense destruction fell upon the records of 2,000 years of a marvellous history, an immense terror on the descendants of the people who had made that history. Evasion was far too dangerous and difficult to occur frequently, for earlier in that same black year of 213, Shih Huang Ti had taken the precaution thoroughly to cow the law-courts by deporting the judges whose verdicts had displeased him and making them join the convict-gangs at the Great Wall. The separate States, too, had been completely disarmed, all their arrow-points and spears melted down and cast into bells and twelve gigantic statues to adorn the palace of their new Lord. With the records of Yao and Shun turned to grey ashes and the guardianship of old texts monopolized by Government scholars who could be trusted to be discreet, Shih Huang Ti felt he had successfully squashed all talk about precedents of frugality, all warnings against ostentatious splendour and could at last unrestrainedly indulge in his favourite pastime—building, especially the building of palaces.

For in architecture with its massiveness and weight, its emphatic seizure of space, ground space and sky space to serve human needs or satisfy human pride, his age found the language that could best express its spirit of conquest and compulsion. He had plans drawn of the palaces of every ruler he defeated and built their exact replicas on the northern bank of the Wei above Hsien Yang. Their number finally reached 270, and it may well be that this astonishing juxtaposition of southern,

central, eastern and western types of building enabled Chinese architecture to evolve the wonderfully clarified synthesis of its true style which made the palaces of the next dynasty models for all time. Besides these 270 residences in his home territory, the first Sovereign Lord possessed 400 in the rest of the Empire. Yet he still felt the need of more—big ones, for he had long found the old Hsien Yang Palace too small. So now, in 212, with his usual energy and scorn for economy, he set 700,000 castrated convicts to work on a new one in the wooded grounds outside but near the capital. They began with the Main Audience Hall. Its dimensions were amazing, 500 feet from North to South, 2,500 from East to West, "banners 500 feet high could be unfurled below, 10,000 men be seated above." The broad viaduct which encircled and on the South joined it to a summit crowned with a triumphal arch, was laid out on a plan reflecting the passage of the most brilliant stars across the wide sweep of the Milky Way.

On similar lines the vault of his mausoleum, for which the entire mountain Li had been tunnelled and excavated, glittered with the constellations of the sky, while on the bronze floor the 100 watercourses, the Kiang and the Ho and the vast sea were traced in mercury kept flowing by cunningly devised machines. Other machines were to hurl stones and arrows automatically at any trespasser evil enough to dig into the grave in search of the riches with which Shih Huang Ti abundantly provided his last abode. The stone sarcophagus was quarried in the mountains of the North—from the South timber was floated to the capital.

Then on the advice of the magician Lu Shêng the vast complex of the older imperial halls within a radius of 70 miles was linked up with the enormous new one by endless walls and paths and corridors so as to form one maze of palaces, each complete by itself and fully furnished with "hangings, curtains, bells, drums and beautiful women," so that the Emperor at a minute's notice could move into any he fancied and no one know beforehand where he would spend the night. The magician Lu had recommended this as a device for warding off evil spirits and for facilitating the search for the fungus of immortality which Shih Huang Ti, passionately attached to his amazingly successful life, would have given all his sons and wives to possess. The fear of assassination may of course also have been at the back of this new secretiveness.

The inevitable reaction against his tyrannical banning of liberty of thought or speech was on the one side sullen discontent, on the other nervous suspicion towards that discontent,



which though never heard, since it had been silenced, was felt all the more acutely as a snake-like danger he had constantly to watch, his secret fears telling him it was constantly watching him. Therefore any of his attendants convicted or merely suspected of having betrayed his movements or words to outsiders was immediately killed. Nor were any of his ministers except Li Ssü allowed any insight into his decisions. All they had to do was to see them properly carried out. He settled everything alone. To cope with the immense amount of work this threw upon him, he made a rule of never going to rest till he had dealt with 120 lb. of documents. True these were bamboo tablets, paper, if already invented, not yet being in general use, but even so the labour involved was prodigious and must have led to a number of hasty verdicts, inevitably swelling the discontent produced by the destruction of the books. There can be no doubt that this act, even apart from its criminal brutality, was a huge political blunder. For it disheartened and temporarily disintegrated the party of moderation, leaving the fierceness of the government face to face with the violence of those among the persecuted who loved power as much as it did itself. A subterranean tremor of unrest, precursor of the frightful period of murder and anarchy ahead, clearly agitated the last years of the tyrant's reign.

With their foreknowledge of events the magicians Lu Shêng and Hin of Han secretly fled, though Shih Huang Ti had loaded them with favours, daily expecting from them the fungus of immortality. Already years before he had sent an expedition of 3,000 young boys and girls under the leadership of Hsu Shih across the Eastern Sea in search of the mystic islands of P'êng lai on which the precious plant was surely to be found. The expedition never returned. Nor did the other magicians he employed succeed any better. Great funds had been placed at their disposal to further their quest. Fear of being called to account probably gave wings to the feet of Lu Shêng and Hin. But Ssü ma Ch'ien, philosophizing over their flight, says they left the Emperor because they considered that with "his violent, cruel and despotic nature, his delight in tortures and executions, his mania for authority," he did not deserve immortal life. When Shih Huang Ti heard of their disappearance his rage knew no bounds, and lashing round for victims on whom to vent itself hit on the scholars in Hsien Yang. They must have turned the magicians against him, their evil tongues no doubt still being at their old game "of spreading calumnies to cause trouble among the Black Heads." That must be stopped. After having them closely questioned, he ordered

460 to be executed, possibly by having them buried alive. The rest were sent to join previous victims of his wrath at work on the Great Wall.

This second monster demonstration of tyranny occurring before public opinion had had time to recover from the shock of the first, roused Shih Huang Ti's eldest son Fu Su, more liberal-minded than his father, as is often the case with heirs, to remonstrate against such dangerously over-strung harshness. All the thanks he got was exile thinly veiled as a commission to superintend Mêng T'ien, the general in charge of the defences on the northern frontiers. On the strength of Lu Shêng's prediction that Hu would ruin Ch'in, Shih Huang Ti, never dreaming this Hu referred to his own son Hu hai and not to China's old enemies the northern barbarians Hu or Hiung nu (Huns), had in 215 sent this Mêng T'ien as being one of his best officers with an army of 300,000 men to deprive them of the power of hurting him. Mêng T'ien did drive them out of the grounds they occupied within the great northern bend of the Huang Ho and even pursued them beyond the river, "his troops wriggling after them like snakes." He was then put in charge of the newly conquered territory, where he erected forty-four walled cities, partly military colonies, partly penal settlements, and vigorously pushed on that systematic linking up of all the fortifications with which the former states had tried to ward off the nomad peril, into one immense chain of wall and watch-towers and fiercely-guarded gates.

Starting on the Tao River, a small affluent of the Huang Ho above the modern Lan Chou Fu, it reached as far as Liao Tung, a distance of over 3,000 miles and was connected with the heart of the Empire by 600 leagues of road "crossing valleys and cutting through mountains." Nothing so gigantic had been attempted by any dynasty since the canalization works of the Great Yü. A thousand years lay between them. Comparing the methods used in the accomplishment of their tasks, the immense difference between the ancient and the new imperialism becomes very clear. The one a spontaneous growth, the other the result of a despotic discipline imposed from without. Yü was a worker among his workers, only toiling harder and better than they. The crowd of labourers needed was supplied freely by that instinct for tribal co-operation which also enables communities of bees and ants to carry out works proportionately just as wonderful. Shih Huang Ti was a slave-driver, a whip in one hand, an executioner's sword in the other.

Mêng T'ien, compelled to carry out such a master's orders,



probably drilled his recruits and forced his gangs of convicts to work in no very gentle manner. Yet he already seems to have possessed that taste for art and scholarship which later on was to be the special glory of China's men of action. At least he is credited with being the inventor of the ch'eng, a twelve-stringed harpsichord, and of the camel's-hair brush which, replacing the stylus, as silk and paper ultimately replaced the bamboo tablets, was destined to work the wonders of Chinese calligraphy and painting.

Meanwhile, in spite of the apparently complete crushing of external and internal foes, news of evil import penetrated into the splendour of the palaces of Hsien Yang.

"A shooting star had fallen to earth in Honan and been found to be a stone. Some one wrote on it: 'On Shih Huang Ti's death the Empire will be divided.' The Emperor sent his inquisitors to discover the perpetrator of this insolence. He could not be found. Then everybody living in that neighbourhood was slain and the offending stone burnt to cinders. Gloom fell upon the First Sovereign Lord. He ordered the scholars of vast learning to write poems on his many journeys and on the immortals,"

of whom he still hoped to become one.

"They were set to music and sung to him, that his sadness might be charmed away."

But then, in autumn, one of his messengers walking on the road at night was stopped by a stranger who offered him a ring of jade and said: "Take this to the Prince of the Hao Pond. Within the year the Dragon Ancestor will die."

Whereupon he vanished. The ring proved to be the very one Shih Huang Ti had cast into the Yangtze-kiang in 219. Troubled, he retired to his private rooms, ruminating: "The Dragon Ancestor—that is the Master of men"—none other than he himself. Could death be so near? He hated it and never allowed it to be referred to in his presence. And his great work of unification—was that to perish with him?

He consulted the trigrams. They answered that journeys and displacements would bring good fortune.

So he decided to start on one of those tours of inspection he enjoyed so much. On the first day of November, 211, he set forth, went by boat down the Yangtze, sacrificed to the Mountains of the South, to the Tomb of the Great Yü and erected a tablet boasting that posterity would observe his laws, that the government he had founded was endless, that neither its chariots nor its ships would ever be overthrown.

Then turning north he lingered a while at his beloved Lang

Ya, drank in its mountain-air and its sea-air and revelled in its views over the Ocean, which with the perpetual unrest of its multitudinous waves, the limitless stretch of its windswept skies, seemed the image of his own soul. Again he asked the magicians about the wonder-islands on the edge of the world and the drug of immortality that grew there. They pretended that a sea-monster had thwarted all their efforts. Whereupon he rode along the beach with his arquebus that shot off many arrows on end and got as far as Chefoo. There he saw a huge fish and killed it.

Near the Ford of P'ing yuen on his way back to the West he fell seriously ill. So the prophecy of the jade ring was coming true after all. Luckily he had prepared a splendid tomb near Hsien Yang and filled it with treasures of which no one would dare deprive him. He wrote a letter to his son Fu Su with strict injunctions to bury him there. Before it had been sent off, he died (22nd July, 210) in the terraced buildings of Shach'iu (Chihli), where Chou Hsin, the last of the Yins, had held foul orgies in the forest of flesh round the Lake of Wine 850 years ago.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE FALL OF THE CH'IN DYNASTY AND THE RESULTING ANARCHY

**A**T the time of Shih Huang Ti's death Chih Huang Ti had with him his youngest and favourite son Hu Hai, his powerful minister Li Ssü, and the Eunuch Chao Kao in charge of the department for despatching the Sovereign's sealed orders. These three now put their heads together and decided to keep the Emperor's death secret. They gave out that though failing and therefore compelled to travel in a closed carriage he was active and alive. This would enable them to reach Hsien Yang in safety. Once there behind the strongly guarded passes and within the well-walled palace no one could thwart their scheme of enthroning Hu Hai instead of Fu Su. They hated the latter's liberal views and apparently also dreaded Mêng T'ien. So they destroyed Shih Huang Ti's last letter to Fu Su and replaced it by a forged one, accusing both him and Mêng T'ien of sundry crimes and misdemeanours and ordering them to put an end to their unworthy lives. Such was the terror his father's word inspired that Fu Su meekly obeyed this terrible command. But Mêng T'ien, suspecting foul play and relying on the strength of his troops, refused to do so. However, Li Ssü's power still purporting to come directly from the Emperor, proved irresistible and the unfortunate general, though his family had served the Ch'ins loyally and brilliantly for three generations, was thrown into a dungeon and compelled to swallow poison.

Meanwhile the imperial train journeyed back to Hsien Yang, Shih Huang Ti in a coffin hidden from view inside the chariot. An eunuch sitting beside it impersonated him. At every stopping-place food was brought to this sham Emperor and the local officials came and presented their reports and memorials, to which he answered from behind the closed curtains. Thus Shansi was reached. It was summer, it was hot. The imperial chariot began to exhale a horrible stench. To conceal its origin 120 lb. of stale salt fish were loaded up on every cart of

the escort, the sun blazing down, the flies buzzing round and in this guise, befouling the air with volleys of mephitic smells, the First Sovereign Lord returned to his capital. There the fact of his death was at last acknowledged and Hu Hai proclaimed Second Sovereign Lord, Erh Shih Huang Ti.

A throb of hope went through the country which had begun to grow restless under the first Emperor's tyranny. "All craned their necks to see how the second would govern." He was young, only twenty-one, and might be expected to generously forswear his father's hard, cruel ways. True, it was ominous that Li Ssü and Chao Kao were his closest advisers, but advisers can be changed and now that the fear of Shih Huang Ti's dominating will was taken from them, quite a large party among the officials, princes and nobles again stood up for a policy of mildness and decentralization. Erh Shih had a unique opportunity of shifting the basis of his dynasty's power from the insecure one of force and fear to the stabler one of popularity. With suicidal folly he flung his opportunity away and where his father had beaten the people with rods he lashed them with scorpions. His very first act was a wholesale holocaust on the occasion of Shih Huang Ti's funeral, all his childless concubines being immolated at his grave. Next, all the workmen who knew its secret tunnelling and the places where the treasures had been hidden were trapped in the passage leading from the crypt into the open, by closing the stone doors upon them before they had time to get out. The earth was then shovelled back and grass and trees planted, that the mausoleum should look like a mountain and show no trace of the marvels and horrors buried within it.

After this exploit Erh Shih felt the need of a change of air and undertook a great progress to the South and East as far as the sea, everywhere adding his own to his father's inscriptions. Li Ssü went with him. It was his last spell of power, for shortly afterwards Chao Kao's influence became paramount. That sinister creature, crawled into high office out of the mud, had the mean hatred of upstarts towards those who possessed a pedigree of which they could well be proud. Working on Erh Shih's suspicious nature he made him prosecute and condemn all the leading men among the officials and the imperial clan. And lest terror should not strike deep enough, none of their dependents, friends or acquaintances were left unmolested, but kept under the constant threat that at any moment on the flimsiest pretext they would fall under the same condemnation. The corpses of twelve princes were exposed in the marketplace, several princesses hacked to pieces. "On the high roads



the gangs of the mutilated and tortured could perceive each other from afar."

To protect himself against the passionate enmities thus incurred, Erh Shih summoned 50,000 sharp-shooters to Hsien Yang. Behind the shelter of their arrows he indulged in every freak that crossed his infatuated brain. He kept so many horses, birds and strange animals the peasants "in a radius of 100 miles could not eat their own harvests," having to surrender them all to the greed of the imperial purveyors.

Work on the O fang Palace, interrupted by Shih Huang Ti's death, was resumed on a vaster scale than ever. What was the use of subjects if they could not supply their Sovereign with all the magnificence he fancied?

Unluckily for him some of these subjects thought differently. Towards the end of 209 Ch'ên Shêng, a subaltern in charge of a body of 900 recruits, whom he was to take to the garrison town of Ta Chai (Anhui) was prevented by heavy rains from reaching his destination on time. This under the harsh imperial laws constituted a crime punishable with death. Faced by such a terrifying prospect and aware that the rapidly accumulating discontent only needed a leader to burst into open revolt, Ch'ên Shêng boldly decided to make a bid for that leadership and appealing to that democratic movement which was one of the unexpected results of the ruin brought on the old royal and noble families by the Ch'ins, incited his recruits to mutiny:

"Might not they also be of the grain of which Kings, ministers, lords and generals are made?"

Enthusiastically they vowed loyalty to him and to each other, called themselves the Army of Ch'u, theoretically at least reviving the state which Shih Huang Ti had destroyed in 223. They fell on Ta Chai, took it by surprise, were joined by local troops, swift to murder their imperial officers, seized other towns and shortly attained such proportions Ch'ên Shêng could venture to call himself King of Greater Ch'u.

His example spread like an epidemic. Magistrates were massacred in their yamens, generals besieged in walled cities, bands from 3,000 to 20,000 strong swelling to hordes of hundreds of thousands, some only armed with sticks and hoes, infested the eastern and central provinces, soldiers, convicts, labourers, brigands, adventurers, scholars, all asking themselves the question which has kindled more than one revolution: "Are we not also of the grain of which kings, ministers, lords and generals are made?"

A messenger hurried to Hsien Yang with these evil tidings. Erh Shih had him killed. Consequently a second messenger

with still blacker news vowed they were the very brightest. Erh Shih, convinced no one would dare commit the sacrilege of rising against his august majesty, readily believed him. On Chao Kao's advice, he had surrounded himself with a halo of mystery and withdrawn from the gaze of the profane into his inner apartments, hardly ever receiving his ministers in audience and transacting all affairs through Chao Kao, an arrangement which of course suited that schemer admirably. But it ate the marrow out of the whole vast administrative system Shih Huang Ti had laboured so hard to establish.

In the winter of 208 Ch'ên Shêng's hordes, multitudinous, threatening, encamped as far West as the Hsi, a tributary of the Wei, within marching distance of Hsien Yang. Mollified by fear, Erh Shih pardoned the convicts at work on the Li Shan tumulus, armed them and sent them forth to risk their lives in his defence. Which, strange to say, they did, successfully too, being led by the best Ch'in general, Chang Han. He rolled the rebel flood right back, and shortly even passed from mere defence to open attack. Dissensions weakened his opponents. Ch'ên Shêng was assassinated by his own coachman and his successor on the exceedingly jerry-built throne of Ch'u was murdered the same year by Hsiang Liang, in his turn beaten and slain by Chang Han.

Nevertheless, with Hsiang Liang's adhesion to the rebel cause the whole movement had gained so enormously in strength it could not be arrested even by his defeat and death. For on the advice of Fan Tsêng, the old politician of the Hill of Skulls, he had given it that glamour of legitimacy needed to tempt even the cautious and moderate to its side. Unlike Ch'ên Shêng, he refrained from seizing the throne of Ch'u for himself but bestowed it on Hsin, a grandson of the last ruler of the old royal family, reduced to earning his living as a shepherd. To mark the return to the old order of things, Hsiang Liang proclaimed him King Huai, the posthumous name of his grandfather. Besides this representative of true royal lineage he gave the rebels a great military leader, his nephew Hsiang Chi, a young dare-devil of twenty-four, eight feet high, strong enough to lift a bronze tripod, fighting and strategy bred in the bone. From father to son the Hsiangs had held high posts in the army of the Ch'u Kingdom and took their name from a fief bestowed on them in reward of valiant service. Hsiang's father, the general Hsiang Yen, had been killed by the Ch'ins, which may have been one reason for Hsiang Liang's revolt against them. However, as both he and his nephew belonged to that militant nobility whose turbulence broke up the separate states, they



felt naturally drawn towards any disturbance which promised the giving, taking and parrying of vigorous blows.

Already when Shih Huang Ti in all the terrifying splendour of his power once passed through Honan, Hsiang Chi remarked it would not be impossible to attack and replace him. Hsiang Liang had a lurid record of murders behind him and signalized his entry into the ranks of the rebels in the autumn of 209 by making his nephew Hsiang Chi slice off a Ch'in governor's head.

Similarly a man who was swiftly to rise to the front rank of the many leaders the disturbed times whirled into prominence, Liu Pang, also began his rôle of a rebel commander by causing the murder of the prefect of his native district P'ei (Kiangsu). He was the third son of a simple farmer of the family Liu of the clan Ki, born about 247 in the village of Chung Yang near Fêng-hsien. He had "a prominent nose, a dragon forehead, a fine beard, seventy-two moles on his left thigh. He was kind, friendly, generous, open-minded. He loved wine and women." Preferring to build grand castles in the air to working in the fields like his brothers he was the ne'er-do-well of the family, but finally drifted into an official job, becoming headman of a ting, that is a group of ten villages, within which he had to maintain order. Though this was quite a humble post, he approached high officials on a footing of equality, only in so winning a manner he was able to get away with it. Two old cronies, Mother Wang and Mother Wu, from whom he bought wine in plenty, were so pleased to see him fill their shop with his jokes and his laughter that on settling-day they always destroyed the long account he had run up with them. Lu Shu-p'ing, a friend of no less a personage than the Prefect of P'ei and himself of some standing, was so favourably impressed by his demeanour he gave him his daughter O-hsü to wife.

Marriage, however, does not seem to have steadied him completely. One of his duties as Ting headman was to escort locally collected convicts to Li Shan for work on the imperial sepulchre. His kind heart turned against this hateful job. He had only got as far as the swamps west of Fêng when happening to have drunk himself into a mood of reckless benevolence, he cut the bonds of his prisoners and told them to bolt. With a dozen of the bravest he bolted too and for several months led a roving existence among the hills and marshes between Honan and Kiangsu in the basin of the Huai River. This district seems to have been a favourite haunt of fugitives from justice. They soon gathered round the ex-Ting headman's jovial leadership, among them his two compatriots Hsiao Ho, a clerk out of work, and Fan K'uai, a dog butcher of P'ei, also

Chang Liang, member of a family which had given ministers to the State of Han for generations.

When Shih Huang Ti destroyed Han, Chang Liang swore revenge and in 218 attempted to assassinate the Emperor by rolling a ton of iron down on his chariot from the height of the hills along which he was travelling. But he missed his aim and demolished the wrong carriage. He fled to Kiangsu and spending his time in deep study of state-craft, became the brains of Liu Pang's band of rovers. The news of Ch'ên Shêng's revolt came to them like a clarion call to action in the blaze of open battle against the despotism of the Ch'ins. Liu Pang, assuming rôle and title of Governor of P'ei, sacrificed to the God of War, daubed his drums with blood and with red banners waving joined Hsiang Liang, recognizing his creation King Huai of Ch'u.

The alarm caused by Hsiang Liang's defeat did not last long, the more so as his nephew Hsiang Chi, after having made himself commander-in-chief of the Ch'u armies by decapitating the one appointed by King Huai, thoroughly avenged his uncle. He beat the Ch'in armies in nine battles and took one of their generals prisoner. Out of the consequent breakdown of imperial authority East of the passes, no less than six of the old Kingdoms leapt back into life, more than half under descendants of their own legitimate dynasties.

King Huai of Ch'u, determined to avenge his grandfather, now sent forth two armies, one under Hsiang Chi, the other under Liu Pang, to beard the Ch'in tiger in his own den. Whoever seized the Capital first was to be recognized King of Ch'in.

With all this war tumult drawing nearer and nearer Li Ssü realized that his late master's work was *in extremis* and with sound political instinct urged a radical change of policy: all taxes and exactions in money or kind to be cut down, forced labour for purposes of transport and garrison duty to be reduced to a minimum, work on the O fang Palace to be stopped at once. In reply, Erh Shih angrily put the whole blame for the rebellion to his account and had him dragged off to prison on a charge of treason. The unfortunate man, though cruelly beaten and tortured, fought hard for his life, writing an eloquent memorial to the Emperor, in which he rebutted the accusation of incompetence and treason by a long list of the services he had rendered the dynasty during his thirty years in office. The appeal never reached the Emperor. It might not have made much difference if it had. Li Ssü was sawn in two in the market-place of Hsien Yang, together with one of his sons.

Chao Kao now ruled supreme, but warned by his rival's fate:



and eager to secure a share at the threatening dismemberment of Erh Shih's Empire, secretly plotted to hasten that event. Chang Han, at the head of war-seasoned troops, still stood firmly between the Emperor and the rebel hordes. The treacherous eunuch frightened him away by subtly conveyed threats of grave imperial displeasure incurred on account of his recent lack of success. With Li Ssü's execution sensationally demonstrating what imperial displeasure meant, Chang Han in self-defence began to listen to Hsiang Chi's invitations to come over to the rebel side, which clearly promised to prove the winning one. While the Emperor's best general was busy bargaining with the man he should have been fighting, his prime minister was coquetting with Liu Pang, whose advance from the south-east was progressing rapidly.

Surrounded by so much treachery no wonder the second Sovereign Lord began to have bad dreams. A white tiger attacked and killed the near side horse of his chariot team. What could it mean? The official soothsayer told him the God of the King Ho had in his wrath sent the ominous dream. He should therefore repair to the Wang I Palace situated in that neighbourhood, purify himself and fling four white horses into the River to pacify the angry Spirit.

It probably was Chao Kao who prompted this advice, the idea being to get Erh Shih out of Hsien Yang where he was too well protected against the assassination with which the eunuch intended to earn the rebels' gratitude. Pretending that Wang I was threatened by brigands he dispatched his brother-in-law, Yen Yue, with a posse of 1,000 men to seize that palace, which they did without much difficulty. Erh Shih's bodyguard only put up a feeble resistance and the miserable creature abandoned by everybody, his abject entreaty to be allowed to live as an ordinary citizen flatly refused, gathered up courage and killed himself. He was just twenty-three and had only reigned a little over two years, but in that short time had contrived to smash up the proud structure which it had taken his ancestors a century to erect. So strong is the disruptive force of folly. His evil genius, Chao Kao, buried him with a maximum of speed and a minimum of ceremony and then, those loyal to the dynasty still being too numerous to disregard, offered the throne to Tzū Ying, eldest son of the prince Fu Su, whose death also lay at his door. Nothing but evil had resulted from that crime.

What he now offered to his victim's heir was not the grand imperial Dragon Throne which the first Sovereign Lord had bequeathed to Fu Su, but the small unadorned one of a mere King of Ch'in. Still it was better than nothing. Tzū Ying

accepted it. With luck he might still be able to regain some of its former splendour. But the star of his dynasty was setting. The only thing he accomplished was to forestall Chao Kao's design on his life. He feigned illness, caught him unawares, cornered him between the window and the door and ran his sword through his body.

But the evil this traitor had wrought lived after him. Chang Han, promised the title and territory of a King of Yung, brought his 200,000 men over to Hsiang Chi. They were placed in the centre of the rebel army, but treated so badly they began to mutter and meditate desertion. Whereupon one night Hsiang Chi had them all butchered in their sleep. Then looting, burning, killing he dashed on towards Hsien Yang. Yet he was not to get there first. Tzū Ying had not reigned forty-six days before Liu Pang, having forced the Wu Pass, scattered the last Ch'in army, pitched his camp on the river Pa, and summoned him to capitulate. Resistance being hopeless, the last of the Ch'ins "bound a silken cord round his neck, mounted a plain cart drawn by white horses, took in his hand the symbol of jade and the seal of the Son of Heaven," left his palace and went and knelt in the dust before the ex-headman of a ting.

It was a fateful hour when the dynasty, founded on force and fraud and fear, fell to the ground and the new dynasty, based on the benevolent morality of the Great Sages, was virtually though not yet actually born. For among the many adventurers, desirous of seizing Shih Huang Ti's heritage, Liu Pang alone grasped the secret springs to success. His peasant shrewdness told him that what had really lost Shih Huang Ti's dynasty was its excessive harshness and greed with consequent loss of popular support; also that what he needed most to make the castles in the air of his young days materialize on firm ground now, was the love of the people. Not the evanescent popularity kindled by a moment's triumph, but the kind that holds firm even through dark days of defeat, because based on genuine affection and esteem. He also realized that to gain this weatherproof popularity he must school himself to rise above the average, to approach as much as possible the old ideal of the Chün tze, the peerless man born to rule because it is pleasant to obey him and beneficial to follow where he leads.

Already on his march West he had forbidden all looting and ill-treatment of the inhabitants whom he thus taught to welcome his presence.

Immediately after Tzū Ying's surrender he sent his heralds, duly accompanied by the old Ch'in officials, to all cities, boroughs and villages, proclaiming:



"O all ye elders and notables, for a long time you have groaned under the vexatious laws of the Ch'ins. Those criticizing the government were killed with all their kindred; those attending meetings left to rot in the market-place. The insurgent leaders have agreed that the first to enter the passes shall become King of the Ch'in territory. I therefore am to be your ruler. I promise to reduce legislation to three enactments:

"He who slays a man shall be slain.

"He who wounds a man or steals shall be punished commensurately with the degree of the offence. All the other laws of the Ch'ins I herewith repeal. Let all officials and private families remain in quiet possession of their holdings. I have not come to be rapacious and cruel but to deliver from oppression. Be without fear."

Delighted, the people of Ch'in brought their oxen, sheep, wine and vegetables to feed the soldiers of Liu Pang. He refused it all, saying: "The public granaries are full. I lack nothing and will be a burden to no one." Which delighted the people of Ch'in still more. All they now dreaded was that he might fail to become their King. He treated the deposed Tzū Ying honourably and following Fan Kuai's and Chang Liang's advice bravely though somewhat reluctantly closed his eyes to the many and very live temptations of the palaces of Hsien Yang; sealed up the treasures they contained and all the imperial storehouses, renounced wine, women and personal wealth, living simply and soberly in his camp on the river Pa, while his right-hand man Hsiao ho pored over the registers, census lists, pay-rolls and maps of the various Government departments, acquiring a most serviceable insight into the geography, resources and administrative mechanism of the Empire his leader was now definitely striving to obtain.

But it took three whole years of struggle against enormous difficulties through the thousand risks and perils of embittered warfare, fighting seventy serious and forty-one minor battles, enduring desperate sieges as besieger or besieged, fleeing from victorious enemies through blinding sandstorms in the dead of night before the goal at last was reached.

In the winter of 206 his fiercest competitor, Hsiang Chi, poured into Ch'in. Enraged at finding Liu Pang in possession, he gave his soldiers a good meal preparatory to hurling them against him on the morrow. Victory seemed certain—he had 400,000 against his rival's 100,000 men. But the latter never lacked devoted helpers to pull him out of danger. At the last minute, Chang Liang and his friend Hsiang Po, an uncle of Hsiang Chi's, managed to arrange a meeting between their chiefs in which the tomahawk was to be buried and an agreement reached. Bringing with him as peace offerings two rings of white jade for Hsiang Chi and two cups of jade for Fan

Ts'êng, Liu Pang arrived at his colleague's camp. Everything seemed friendly, a big banquet was spread, to which they all sat down.

However, Fan Ts'êng, the old schemer of the Hill of Skulls, had persuaded Hsiang Chi to have his guest murdered before the last bowl of rice was served. He kept on jingling his jade trinkets as a signal for the attack and made Hsiang Chuang, a cousin of Hsiang Chi's, start a sword dance, in the excitement of which he was to do the deed. But Hsiang Po promptly jumped up, drew his sword and also began to gyrate round, carefully keeping between the two.

Matters were taking an ugly turn. Alarmed, Chiang Liang hurried out and called Fan K'uai, whose brawny bulk might overawe the assassins. The ex-dog-butcher of P'ei girded on his sword and with a big shield bowled over the guards who tried to oppose him, brushed the curtain aside, strode in and glared at Hsiang Chi.

"His hairs stood on end, his eyes bulged terrifically."

Hsiang Chi asked:

"Stranger, who are you?"

Chang Liang answered:

"It is Fan K'uai whose place is at Liu Pang's side in the chariot."

Hsiang Chi ordered a cup of wine three times the usual size to be given him. He quaffed it standing. Then Hsiang Chi ordered an uncooked shoulder of pork to be brought to him. Fan K'uai placed it on his shield on the ground, sliced it up with his sword and ate it. And Hsiang Chi asked:

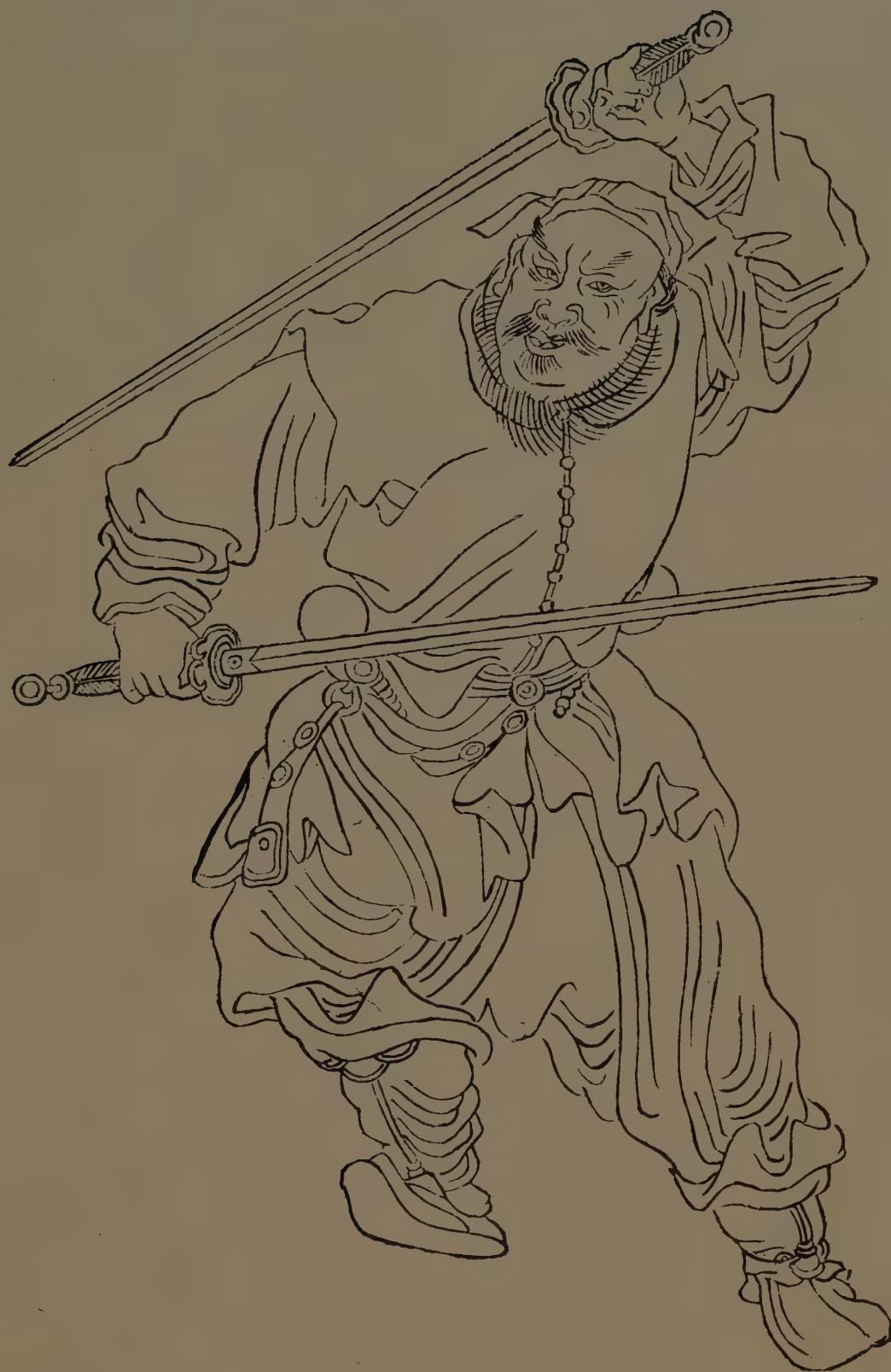
"Valiant warrior, can you still drink?"

Fan K'uai answered:

"I would not avoid death, how should I refuse a cup of wine? The Ch'in Emperor had the heart of a wolfish tiger, he slaughtered men as if they were unexterminable, he tortured them as if he feared they could not be tamed. That drove the empire to rebellion. King Huai of Ch'u agreed with the generals that whoever overthrew Ch'in and entered Hsien Yang should be made King of that country. The governor of P'ei (Liu Pang) was the first to do so. He appropriated nothing, but encamped on the river Pa awaiting your arrival. If you do away with a man of such merit you continue that conduct of the Ch'ins which destroyed them."

Hsiang Chi, finding nothing to answer, bade him sit down. Shortly afterwards Liu Pang found a pretext for slipping out and dashed back to his own camp which by a short cut was only seven miles off. This time he had escaped scot-free, but he





HSIANG CHI, PU WANG (233-202 B.C.)

THE MOST FORMIDABLE RIVAL OF LIU PANG, FOUNDER OF THE HAN DYNASTY





knew that henceforth between him and Hsiang Chi there burned a deadly enmity which must annihilate one of the two.

Outnumbered and still lacking sufficient support he was for the time being compelled to relinquish the control of affairs into his rival's hands, stupid, evil, brutal hands. For Hsiang Chi had all the ruthlessness of Shih Huang Ti and none of his ability. Perhaps for this reason he persecuted with the most malignant meanness everything that recalled the memory of the First Sovereign Lord, murdered his grandson Tzū Ying and every remaining member of his family, massacred all the inhabitants of his capital, violated his tomb, seized the treasures and the beautiful women of his palaces, then set them on fire. Three months they blazed, and all the books collected there went up in flames and vanished. After which, instead of consolidating his position in the Ch'in territory, geographically most favourably situated for dominating the other principalities, he returned East, loaded down with stolen goods. He could not resist the temptation of peacocking on his native heath in his fine new feathers. Hearing how one of his advisers had on that account called him a preposterous ape, he proved to him that the ape is a dangerous beast and had him boiled alive.

His next feat was to give the map of China that grotesque, untenable shape dear to the heart of infatuated victors, splitting up the Empire Shih Huang Ti had laboured so hard to unite into no less than eighteen states. These he distributed, not according to the merits of the various claimants, still less according to the wishes of the people, solely according to his need of securing supporters and thwarting potential enemies. He gave them all the title of King, while he was nicknamed Pa Weng, the Chief Tyrant. To reduce Ch'in to complete impotence he tore it up into three states, of which Chang Han obtained one, Yung, according to promise and on the understanding that he was to keep Liu Pang in check. For Liu Pang was made his neighbour, being given the districts Pa and Chou (on the upper Han River and in Northern Ssŭ Ch'uan) because they were "poor in everything except difficulties" and mainly inhabited by convicts. When King Huai of Chu protested against this barefaced flouting of the convention made between him, Liu Pang and Hsiang Chi, the latter, cynically believing that victory cancels all promises made to ensure it, extinguished King Huai politically by loading him down with the title of an Emperor, I Ti, the Righteous Lord.

It was a flattering name, but emptied of all substantial power, since he seized for himself Huai's very real Kingdom of

Ch'u. To make it more real still he shortly afterwards added bodily to the Righteous Emperor's political extinction, getting him murdered on his way to the Southern city of Chên to which he had relegated him.

So this attempt to save the form of the imperial unity ended in blood and treachery. It never was meant sincerely. Separatism continued in full blast harassing the country with jealousies, hatreds, intrigues, bickerings, war. For no sooner had the peace settlements been proclaimed, the soldiers been officially disbanded (May-June, 206), the new Kings departed to their various capitals, than they fell to snarling and growling over their respective shares. Some royal highnesses in the North were the first to fly at each other's throat. Liu Pang in his rainy corner in the West was revolving many schemes to relieve the dullness of only being King of Han. He had destroyed the hanging viaducts leading through the mountains to his Kingdom, no doubt as a precaution against Chang Han, but his adherents, mostly men from the East, "were standing on tip-toe day and night to catch a glimpse of the road leading home." Among them there was Han Hsin, born in Kiangsu and at one time earning such a miserable pittance as a small official's underling in Nan Ch'ang, that he was thankful to accept a washerwoman's charity. Him also Ch'ên Shêng's rebellion swept into the current of stirring events which gave full scope to his military gifts. He became Liu Pang's ablest general. As such he had no intention of remaining shelved in an obscure corner of the Empire he longed to conquer for his chief. So he persuaded Liu Pang not to wait till the driving force of his followers' home-sickness had been blunted by time and peace had grown into a habit, but to plunge at once into the fight for rectifying the preposterous boundaries traced by Hsiang Chi.

Accordingly in autumn of that very same year (206) Liu Pang attacked Chang Han, beat him twice, held him besieged in his capital Fei Kiu, smashed up the other two Ch'in states and once again marched triumphantly into Hsien-yang—a sad, impoverished Hsien-yang—but still worth courting. He earned fresh popularity there by allowing the country folk to turn all the former imperial parks, gardens and pleasure lakes into arable land. Then having induced three kings to submit to him and dispossessed a fourth, he replaced the Ch'in Gods of the Soil and the Harvests by those of Han, signifying that he had taken over their heritage. By April, 205, he had reached Lo yang. There, hearing of I Ti's assassination, he was not slow to pick up the trump card of legitimacy which Hsiang Ch'i had carelessly flung away. "He bared his arms and wept, and



for three days lamented," and put on white mourning clothes and proclaimed far and near that Hsiang Chi had committed a great crime and must be punished for having slain the Righteous Lord.

Hsiang Chi meanwhile was busy piling up his criminal record, raging against the disturbed northern states with unspeakable cruelty. "He massacred soldiers who had surrendered, he enchained and enslaved old men, women and children, he burnt and destroyed ramparts and cities."

Driven to desperation the people rose once more in arms and Liu Pang, attacking their tormentor from the West, South and East, and actually taking possession of his capital P'êng-ch'êng (in Kiangsu), it looked as if Hsiang Chi's days were numbered. But he was a brilliant fighter. Dropping his northern prey he went for Liu Pang, who having prematurely relaxed the self-discipline he exercised at the taking of Hsien-yang, spent his days carousing and enjoying the many good things amassed in Hsiang Chi's capital. Taken by surprise he suffered a terrible defeat, would indeed have been wiped out, if a typhoon uprooting trees, blinding Hsiang Chi's soldiers with dust and grit, had not stopped the pursuit. As it was, his parents and wife were captured and kept in Hsiang Chi's camp as hostages.

But Liu Pang had that supreme quality of genuine builders, he never knew when he was beaten. Driven back from the East, he returned West and consolidated his position there. He flooded Fei Kui, its poor King Chang Han, weary of the endless shiftings of the political kaleidoscope, finding peace in suicide. He collected his reserves. He invoked the aid of Heaven, of Earth, of the Guardians of the four quarters, of the Mountains and the Rivers. Then he sallied forth once more and took up a strong position in Yung Yang (Honan) near the big grain depot established by Shih Huang Ti on the Hill of Ao. For months the two armies sat and glared at each other across their ramparts.

"Strong men wore themselves out in the ranks, old men and children with the transport of food."

Once, to induce his enemy to surrender, Hsiang Chi erected a scaffold in full sight of Liu Pang's camp, placed his father on it and threatened to have the old man boiled alive. Undaunted Liu Pang sent back word:

"At the time we both acknowledged King Huai, we became brothers, therefore my father is your father. If nevertheless you insist on boiling our father, send me a cup of the broth."

Which made Hsiang Chi reconsider his threat. A meeting took place for negotiating some sort of settlement. Treacher-

ously Hsiang Chi shot an arrow at Liu Pang, wounding him in the breast. To prevent a panic among his men Liu Pang pretended he had only been hit on the toe and got back to his camp. But of course all talk of peace and compromise was silenced for the time being.

Feeling that Hsiang Chi was unconquerable as long as he could draw on the cunning of the schemer of the Hill of Skulls, Liu Pang contrived to blight their friendship with the poison-gas of calumny. Fan Ts'êng, indignant at being suspected, shook the dust of his ungrateful master's camp off his feet and started to return to his old home. He had not got far before an abscess in his back sent him to a more final destination. With only his own brains to guide him, Hsiang Chi soon tangled up his affairs so hopelessly that Han Hsin was able to crush his strongest allies.

Whereupon peace talk blossomed forth again. In the gully of Kuang Wu, between the King of Ch'u's battlements on the eastern and those of the King of Han on the western ridge, an agreement was reached. The Empire was divided, the small stream Hêng to form the boundary, peace and goodwill to prevail henceforth for ever. Hsiang Chi, this time quite sincere, withdrew eastwards, disbanding some of his troops. But the man who had betrayed so often was in the end to be betrayed himself. Chang Liang, the student of state-craft, knew that a narrow river-bed is not the kind of frontier which will preserve peace very long between inveterate foes. At best the treaty of Kuang Wu was only an armistice. The moment Hsiang Chi had got his army into shape again he would stride across that futile stream and reopen hostilities. Then the eight years' fighting, of which even the generals were sick, would start all over again with an issue none could foresee. Truly an appalling prospect. Was it not wiser to make sure of the permanent settlement so terribly needed, take advantage of the exhausted condition of Hsiang Chi's troops, attack them from the rear, scatter them, destroy him and unite the Empire in the hands of Liu Pang?

Thus tempted Liu Pang did not march West, but East. His soldiers were fit and well fed, those of Hsiang Chi weary and on short rations. Nevertheless, and though taken unawares, Hsiang Chi's military talent rose to the occasion and flamed up in a last victory. Liu Pang was severely beaten. But Han Hsin coming to the rescue, Hsiang Chi found himself surrounded by dense circles of steel. His own people, with whom he had never been popular, forsook him by the thousand. At night he could hear them singing in the enemy's camp.





YÜ CHI

THE BEAUTIFUL SECONDARY WIFE OF HSIANG CHI





Troubled and feeling deserted he rose and drank with the beautiful Yu who always accompanied him, bewailed his fate and sang :

“ My strength uprooted mountains ; my vigour ruled the world.  
The times have turned against me ; my swift horse runs no more.  
If my swift horse runs no longer, what is it I can do ?  
And oh my moth eye-browed beauty, what will become of you ? ”

“ They wept and dared not look into each other's eyes.” Then he jumped into the saddle ; with 800 picked horsemen dashed through the enemy ranks under cover of the dark and galloped and galloped till it was broad day. Then the Hans started in pursuit.

Near a mountain he lost his way. A peasant to mislead him directed him to the left, where he got embogged in swamps. So Liu Pang's men overtook him. There were thousands. Of his 800 he had only twenty-eight left. The game was up. For the last time he addressed them, saying :

“ Eight years I have been fighting. In seventy battles I was in command. Those who resisted me I crushed, those who attacked me I subdued. I was never beaten. I possessed the Empire. I am reduced to extremity now because Heaven wants to destroy me, not because my prowess failed. This day I am determined to die, but first will break three times through the enemy ranks, decapitate one of their leaders, cut one of their banners in two ! ”

All of which and more he did. At last, bleeding from at least ten wounds, he confronted Wang I, one of Liu Pang's officers, and said :

“ I have heard that the price of a pound of gold and a fief of 10,000 hearths has been placed on my head—I give it you ! ”

And he cut his throat. Wang I seized his head. Others fell on the body and fought with each other in their fierce scramble for a piece. Five successfully carried off one member each, and were duly rewarded with a marquisate. The mangled remains seem to have been gathered again, for Hsiang Chi was solemnly buried with the rites befitting a duke of Lu, the rank once conferred on him by King Huai. Liu Pang even wept at the funeral, at least in public. He might not know when he was beaten, but he did know when he was a victor, and that only the magnanimous victor remains one long. Therefore, far from exterminating his dead enemy's family, he created Hsiang Po marquis and took some other Hsiangs into his own clan, giving them his family name of Liu. He had not long to wait for his reward. In midwinter, 202, all leaders military and political unanimously petitioned him to accept the title of Sovereign Lord. Three times he refused, but at last accepted, and on the

third day of the second moon (28th February, 202) in Shantung, whence so much fate has issued for China, he assumed the name of Kao Ti, the Exalted Lord, and became the founder of the fifth dynasty, which he called Han after his first humble Kingdom in the wilds of the West.



## CHAPTER IV

### HAN DYNASTY FOUNDED

A NEW milestone was set up so near the old one, that its shadow fell upon it. It took over from it its organization, its vigorous foreign policy, its pride, its efficiency, its determined fight against separatism; but it faced in the opposite direction, towards conciliation instead of violence, towards legality instead of despotism, above all towards profound reverence instead of destructive hatred of the past. Therefore it stood upright for 400 years, and when it fell, left a name to conjure with, a memory which every great dynasty tried to urge back into life.

Of course the task of stabilizing the new structure was beset with problems, some of which time alone could fully solve. The greatest was inducing men to give up the habit of the destructive vagabondage of civil war for the humdrum toil of peace. Liu Pang therefore began by disbanding soldiers and enacting that such of his subjects "as were still roaming in multitudinous bands in mountains and marches should return each to his own district, clan, field and dwelling." But many either had no homes left to go to, or had grown so used to a predatory life that laborious tilling of brambly fields had no attraction for them whatsoever. They formed a mobile proletariat, a reservoir of idlers from which every rebelliously inclined noble could draw the fighting forces needed to further his ambitious schemes. They aggravated the general poverty produced by the long-drawn-out conflict.

Liu Pang had inherited the throne of the Ch'ins but also their "ruin. Labour was painful, wealth exhausted. The Son of Heaven himself could not have a team of four horses of one colour. Generals and councillors drove in ox-carts. The people were without provisions to hide or store."

Therefore unrest, revolts and rumours of revolt troubled his entire reign. He had done his best to satisfy everybody, bestowing kingdoms on the most eminent of his commanders, the revenues of certain towns as lifelong annuities on superior

officers, and exempting those below the seventh grade from taxation and forced labour.

At the same time generosity was counterbalanced by the dread of making old friends too powerful, especially those who exceeded him in military capacity. Han Hsin, whom he had created King of Ch'u, being the foremost among his generals, was also the first to fall under suspicion. Arrested and degraded to a paltry marquisate he was allowed to ruminate on human ingratitude till 196, when the Empress Lü took advantage of her husband's absence to have the great leader beheaded on a trumped-up charge of treason.

Besides his own adherents the new Emperor had to watch those of the vanquished side not immediately involved in Hsiang Chi's destruction and whom, to hasten the cessation of hostilities, it had been necessary to placate by confirming them in their fiefs. Naturally they had no illusion as to the security of their tenure and rose up in arms while they still had enough of them left to do so. They failed, the tide of separatism was running out, that of unity flowing in; Liu Pang used his triumph skilfully and through further marchings and battlings succeeded in enforcing his policy, which remained that of the dynasty, of first clipping the wings and paring the claws of the old Kingdoms by well-planned subdivisions and then whenever occasion offered or was brought about, bestowing these reduced parts on near relations of the Emperor. For at that period there was no reliable loyalty except that of the family and only by making use of its strength could the separate states be welded into a whole.

Shih Huang Ti's attempt to make the loyalty of officials the cementing medium failed completely, not because it was utopian, but because it was premature. It took a series of able rulers like the early Hans plus the revival of K'ung Tzŭ's teaching so to enhance the idea of a central government in public consciousness as to make unswerving devotion to its welfare grow into a force stronger even than family loyalty. Liu Pang never was ahead of his times. His strength lay in his instinctive grasp of the chief needs and duties of each day as it came. That gave him quite enough to do, especially as his empire's most urgent need happened to be the safeguarding of its frontiers against the invasions of the Hiung-nu.

The raids of these chronic enemies were assuming such a dangerous aspect that already as mere King of Han, in the midst of his struggle with Hsiang Chi, he had been obliged to attend to the strengthening of part of the Great Wall in order



to keep them out. With their swift horses and the deadly accuracy of their shooting they had not been slow to take advantage of the weakening of the frontier guard subsequent to the death of Mêng T'ien and the collapse of the Ch'in dynasty. They had re-crossed the Yellow River, re-seized the whole ground within its northern loop. In 200 they harried Shansi with their raids. Always terribly destructive, these were this time envenomed by the extra sting of political ambition and co-ordinated by one deep scheming will, that of Mo-tun, the new Tengri Kudu Jenuye, the Immense Son of Heaven of the Hiung-nu.

For the tendency towards centralized authority which had made the Ch'in Empire and was now establishing that of the Hans had spread to the nomads and given them a Shih Huang Ti of their own, domineering, energetic, sanguinary, the typical organizer and horseback conqueror whom the round felt tents, lost in wilds half desert and half pasture land under horizons pitiless and infinite, from time to time brought forth to scourge their neighbours, whether tribes or states.

Eldest son of the Hiung-nu chieftain Dorban, he began by training the men under his command to blind and instant obedience. He made an order that they must always discharge a full volley at whatever mark he hit with a singing arrow. Whoever hesitated was at once decapitated.

On the first occasion he chose his favourite horse, on the second his favourite wife, on the last and crucial one, for which the others had only been a preparation, his own father. Dispatching after him every one of his relatives who stood in his way, he got himself proclaimed Immense Son of Heaven. He seems to have borrowed his sonorous title from the Chinese, also some of the administrative organization he imposed on his own people and on the tribes he gradually subdued, like the Tunguses and the Yüeh chi.

Otherwise there was nothing Chinese about him and his unwashed horsemen who married their father's and brothers' widows, drank out of their dead enemy's skull, lived on flesh and kumiss, and had so little power of abstract thought, they never felt the need for a written language. Most of their wars being slave and cattle raids, they evolved peculiar tactics specially adapted for sudden rushes and ambushes or rapid flight. They would pounce on the enemy in one compact mass "like a swarm of crows, but when in danger or defeat they would scatter in all directions like roof tiles in a storm."

Mo-tun, the right monarch for such fighters, had no intention of allowing Liu Pang's claim to being the rightful

Son of Heaven. He would teach that southern upstart who really held the mandate from on high. With this end in view he sought for traitors among his rival's vassals, not a difficult task with that slippery, self-seeking crowd.

Hsin, whom Liu Pang had created King of the Han region, extending through Honan and Shansi, with the special charge of guarding this important northern boundary, first let himself be defeated and then won over by the barbarian conqueror. Almost the entire North became embroiled in interlacing anarchies of foreign attacks and domestic strife. The situation looked so black, Liu Pang took the field himself.

It was winter and bitterly cold. Nearly 30 per cent. of his soldiers lost their fingers through frost-bite. To make matters worse, he allowed Hiung-nu tactics to decoy him too far from his base. Suddenly he found himself surrounded, cut off and short of food in the frontier fort of P'ing-ch'êng. For a whole week Mo-tun's cavalry, the white horses massed on the West, the grey on the East, the black on the North, the red (chestnut) on the South, 400,000 of them, held him in a vice out of which there seemed no way but surrender. But Mo-tun's camp was as little immune from treachery as Liu Pang's. Apparently handsome gifts presented to his most influential wife caused a gap to open in the strangling circle. The southern Son of Heaven escaped from the grip of the northern one, defeated his rebellious vassals and left Fan K'uai to restore order along the troubled frontier.

In the end, Hsin of Han taking refuge with the Hiung-nu, his fief was handed over to Liu chung, the Emperor's elder brother. However, Hiung-nu incursions soon scared him off it again, and when peace terms were arranged, honours were clearly on Mo-tun's side. He received a Han princess to wife and annual gifts of silk, rice-wine and toothsome delicacies. All he offered in return was a promise to abstain from further raids. With many other troubles on his hands Liu Pang had to rest content with that.

Nevertheless, Hsiao Ho, with a faith in the star of the Han, which the future amply justified, and thinking that building on a large scale would both give employment to idlers and convince the people that the new dynasty had come to stay, had erected a vast residence on the site of the Ch'in palace of Contentment and Joy (Hsing Lo) on the northern bank of the Wei, no doubt making use of what was left of its walls and materials. The plan, though, was his own, comprising a pillared eastern Gate of the Bluegreen Dragon and a northern one of the Dark Warrior, an immense throne room and a granary.



Lo Yang, the old capital of the Chous, had been chosen at first, but the superior geographical position of Hsien-yang and perhaps also the attraction of its recent splendour drew the administrative centre back to the banks of the Wei, only, as far as the city itself was concerned, to the southern instead of to the northern bank.

It was called Ch'ang-an, the city of peace spreading far in time and space, and was destined at times to be the wealthiest, loveliest, most intellectual town in China, marking one of the summits attained by her civilization so rich in dazzling summits.

Under Liu Pang all this of course was only in the making. When he took possession of his new palace he found that the first thing to be done was to teach both himself and his court how to behave in it. The manners of cottages and camps introduced into those solemn halls presented a most unseemly spectacle. Officers, princes, ministers jostled and knocked each other about, got drunk, shouted, spat, quarrelled, slashed the pillars with their brandished swords, utterly destroying the dignity without which imperial authority lacked the weight necessary for upholding law and order. How accurately K'ung Tzū had judged his countrymen when he chose observance of elegant forms as the lever wherewith to raise them to a higher plane of morality and mould them into responsible citizens, appeared now that Liu Pang, the rough trooper become Emperor, instinctively came to the same conclusion. The vast throne room, the large assemblies, the complex burdens of his position made him realize that any institution to endure, to be safe from the irresponsibilities of surface moods and passions must be protected by a hedge of ritual, a suave mystery of forms spreading that aura of reverence which is a gentler but far more efficient method of control than the threat of physical violence.

So he appealed to a group of scholars to make a selection out of their store of ancient rites imposing and dignified, yet allowing for the inability of ordinary mortals to carry out a ceremonial so elaborate it could only be properly handled by men born within it. Consequently many of the grand forms used by Shih Huang Ti, descendant of a long line of Kings, were scrapped and died out, for though Liu Pang claimed descent from Yao, he was fully aware that if any such distinguished blood did really flow in his veins it had suffered 2,000 years of dilution. Probably he never felt wholly at ease in his grand imperial residence, however much it might be called the Palace of Perpetual Joy.

But at his old home P'ei, among his own people where natural good humour took the place of good manners, where one

could get drunk and make merry without imperilling a throne, he was unrestrainedly happy. There feasting with his old cronies male and female, laughing over episodes of the past they all remembered, after much wine had flowed he struck the lute and broke into song:

“ Stormwinds blow,  
Clouds fly oh!  
Master of all to the edge of the sea,  
My native home I come back to thee.  
Canst give me soldiers strong to guard  
The quarters four with watch and ward? Oh!”

Then he danced and wept and said:

“ Exiles grieve remembering home. I have to live far away inside the passes, but after 1,000 autumns and 10,000 years my soul will still think lovingly of P’ei. From P’ei I rose to slay the cruel tyrant. Let P’ei be free from taxes from generation unto generation.”

This visit took place on his return from a somewhat serious war he had to wage against K’ing-pu, ruler of Huai Nan, an old friend turned into a bitter enemy. As Chên Shêng’s brother-in-law he had been one of the first to join the rebellion against the Ch’ins, whom he had little cause to love, having been degraded from his rank as an officer, and sent to labour at Shih Huang Ti’s mausoleum. He was one of those who when asking fate the question whether they were not also of the seed from which kings, generals and ministers are bred, saw it answered in the affirmative. Both at Hsiang Chi’s and Liu Pang’s distribution of thrones he obtained one, and would no doubt have been quite content to end his days amid the pleasures and responsibilities of a small provincial court.

But the execution of Han Hsin, followed by that of Peng wu, successively fisherman, poacher, brigand, rebel, general, marquis, king, made him feel the insecurity of his own position and disgusted him with serving a chief who could reward the immense services those two men had rendered him with the death of criminals. When he received his portion of Peng wu’s quartered and pickled body distributed among all the vassal kings as a pleasant reminder of the reality of imperial authority, he saw red and determined to make an effort to seize that authority himself. Beaten in several engagements, he was captured and executed, presumably his body also getting sent round in pickled titbits.

About the same time Ch’ên pi, another old supporter of the days of struggle and rebel of the days of triumph, was caught and decapitated. The circle of familiar faces was narrowing



down ominously around Liu Pang. The many hardships he had experienced had aged him prematurely. At fifty-two, except when exhilarated by wine, his zest in life was failing. Besides, in the campaign against King-pu, he had been wounded in the shoulder by a stray arrow. Slowly he returned to the capital. The loss of four of his ablest companions through a nightmare tangle of mutual jealousies, envies, suspicions, ingratiitudes was bringing it dimly home to him that there could be neither peace nor permanence for his dynasty on a foundation of fear, force and selfishness. Something had been lacking in his government that there was still so much bloodshed, so much desire to revolt. What was it?

Haunted by the spirits of his murdered friends, he passed a grave in the wide plains of Lu, in those days still a simple grave with some old trees, a plain temple probably out of repair, for the times were hard and persecutions barely ended.

There he heard the voice he needed, that quiet voice out of the past, which had shown rulers how to be strong yet merciful, subjects how to be free yet faithful, all men how to honour, help and trust each other, which laid the foundations of the state not in perishable walls and weapons and suspicious watchfulness but in the undying instincts of the heart, in the love uniting families, in the loyalty sustaining friends, in the reverence and understanding helping the teacher and the taught.

A voice which said that authority must be held as sacred as the trust of parenthood, obedience yielded with as much joyful willingness as children give their father and their mother; the bond between the ruler and the ruled generous discharge of mutual obligations, not greedy clamouring for rights.

Then he bowed down and worshipped and brought the great sacrifice of a whole ox, for this was the grave of K'ung Fu Tzū the great sage whose teaching Shih Huang Ti had endeavoured to obliterate.

Liu Pang's intrinsic greatness which could rise above personal prejudices to the vision of essentials was never shown more clearly. A man of action, not of study, more given to swearing than to quoting the Classics, he held scholars in such contempt, that when he met one he would in rough horse-play pull off his hat and worse than spit into it. Yet the moment he realized that neither the sword nor political expediency could make his authority really secure, that nothing could do this except surrender to K'ung Tzū's moral principles, then unhesitatingly he humbled himself to what really amounted to a solemn act of recantation and with his own hand opened the door of power and influence to K'ung Tzū's interpreters and

publicly declared that the radiant royal road the sage had once rescued from oblivion was at last to be walked upon again.

With this far-reaching gesture his reign practically closed. A few months later the neglected arrow-wound festered, and on the 1st June, 195, this life of extraordinary adventures, vicissitudes, dangers, hair-breadth escapes, inconceivable triumphs and fateful importance to his people ended in what may be proved the greatest adventure and triumph of all, in death.

During his illness O hsü, the wife of his youth, now Empress Lü, no longer young, the hardness of her heart no doubt sharpening her features and wrinkling her face with terrifying lines, had seized effective control of the government. It was she who instigated Liu Pang's harshness against his former brothers-in-arms. Now she planned to make a clean sweep of all the remaining ones, so as to rid the Lius and her family the Lüs, of all actual or potential rivals. With this treachery in mind she kept her husband's death secret for four days, but refrained from carrying out her murderous scheme by remembering in time that several, like Fan K'uai, Ch'en ping and Chou P'o were in command of over 300,000 men and in such strong military positions they could easily turn the tables on her.

So on 23rd June Liu Pang the Sublime Sovereign Lord, in a robe adorned with pearls and an abundance of jade trinkets placed in his coffin of hard rottlera wood, painted with a sun, a moon, a bird, a tortoise, a dragon, and a tiger, was laid to rest in the sepulchre of Ch'ang Ling to the north of the capital. Quantities of all the things he might need or fancy, weapons, a red bow and red arrows, a shield, a lance, a coat of mail, a helmet, carriages, bells, sonorous stones and other musical instruments, goblets, ewers, wine-jars, robes, light silks, heavy silks, lacquer ware, pickled meat, rice, corn, valuables, gold were stored around him, the yellow wood of the heart of cypress trees filling the cool dark crypt with the fragrance of a sacred grove. Finally, after all the wailing and lamenting was ended, a mound 120 feet high was piled up over him and a large number of families settled near by to tend and protect the grave, while his and the Empress Lü's son Liu Ying became Emperor in his stead. He is known as Hui Ti the Humane Lord.

Only fourteen, too sensitive for the fierce times in which his lot was cast, his mother's towering will-power, before which even Liu Pang sometimes quailed, made him wilt into insignificance. His father felt no pride in this weak shrinking lad and greatly preferred his third son the Prince of Chao, partly because he was more like him, partly because he loved his mother the concubine Ch'i considerably more than his ageing and



shrewish Empress. It was only on the urgent advice of Chang Liang, who thought a new dynasty could not run the risk of a disputed succession, that he abstained from giving way to the Lady Ch'i's entreaties, and nominating her son heir-presumptive in place of the colourless Liu Ying.

It speaks well for the latter that he bore his little stepbrother no ill-will for the preference shown him. On the contrary, he took pleasure in his bright companionship and did his best to shield him from his mother's hatred. This terrible woman, the moment she was armed with the full powers of an Empress-Dowager, let all the pent-up jealousies of years, during which the Lady Ch'i accompanied the Emperor on his travels, while she was left to mope alone and neglected in Ch'ang-an, burst in one virulent jet on her now defenceless rival.

She poisoned her son, the bright little prince of Chao, "she cut off her hands and her feet, she tore out her eyes, she burnt her ears, she poured a drug down her throat which rendered her speechless," called her the human sow and pitched her out to agonize slowly in the palace privy.

Elated at the magnitude of her revenge she bade the young Emperor gaze at her handiwork. He was so horrified not only at the ghastly sight, but at the crushing thought that the perpetrator of such outrageous fiendishness was his own mother, that he fell ill and never quite recovered.

The shock had scarred reality for him with an appalling frightfulness from which he saw no escape except in the short spells of oblivion produced by sensual indulgence. It made him think the world held far too much evil for his small strength ever to be able to control it.

So he "let his robe drag, folded his hands" and left all power to his mother, which no doubt suited her admirably, while he drank and made merry in a heart-broken fashion, lying down to die when barely twenty in the early autumn of 188.

The Dowager, needing a grandson on the throne small enough for her regency to continue, passed off the baby of one of his concubines as the son of his wife, who also was his niece, the child of the Empress Lü's only daughter. To prevent inconvenient revelations the unfortunate concubine was killed. But murder will out. One day the little Emperor heard of these sinister doings and indignantly remarked: "When I am grown up I shall make changes."

He never did grow up. His grandmother, alarmed at his budding independence, pronounced him sick and mentally too deficient to be ever capable of ruling. With all the councillors overawed by her basilisk eye, knocking their frightened heads

acquiescingly on the ground before her, she had him deposed and presently put away like any impertinent, superfluous puppy. To save the convention forbidding a woman to rule by her own right, Hui Ti was posthumously endowed with another son, I, prince of Ch'ang Shan.

This helpless little mortal, suitably dressed up, was paraded as an Emperor. But nobody took any notice of him and his name was never entered in the list of sovereigns.

All this happened in 184. Both before and after this date the Dowager schemed, murdered, intrigued, cajoled to humiliate her husband's family and exalt her own, perhaps prompted by memories of the old days, when the Lüs, friends of a live Prefect, had looked down on the boorish Lius and thought it an act of supreme condescension to choose a son-in-law from among such humble people.

At the time of Liu Pang's death, seven of his sons by concubines were living, all in possession of royal fiefs. Few escaped their stepmother's dangerous attentions. The eldest only saved himself by surrendering the best slice of his kingdom to her daughter. The youngest did die a natural death, but his son was assassinated and his kingdom annexed by her.

Another, the first King of Chao, she poisoned; yet another, the second King of Chao, she starved to death. To the fifth, also made King of Chao by her, she gave a Lü to wife not to please but to watch him. She removed the woman he loved by her favourite weapon, poison, and surrounded him with so much spying and hindering, she drove him to commit suicide.

Depriving him of a royal funeral and his sons of their heritage, she then offered Chao to her husband's fourth son, Liu Hêng, King of Tai. Warned by the excessive mortality among previous Kings of Chao he declined the perilous honour on the ground that he was busy guarding the frontier against the Hiung-nu. As she had reasons of her own for hating these, she let the excuse pass, and allowed him to remain in Tai beyond the immediate range of her fangs, a circumstance to which he probably owed his life and the Lius their ultimate avenger.

But throughout her reign the Lius had to walk warily while the Lüs spread themselves in the sunshine of their kinswoman's favour, and even climbed unto royal thrones despite the oath Liu Pang's councillors had sworn to him, their lips smeared with the sacrificial blood of a white horse, that if ever anyone not a member of the Liu family should be made King they would all unite against him. But the mound above their dead master's grave was 120 feet high, and the anger of his widow very near and very live. Therefore to save their heads they kept on



knocking them on the ground before her and saying yes and amen to everything she proposed.

That much stands to her credit that apart from the prosecution of her policy of nepotism and family vendettas she proposed nothing that militated against the public interest or consolidation of imperial power. She abrogated the cruel law extending the death penalty to a condemned criminal's entire family, also (in 190) Shih Huang Ti's edict against the readers of the prohibited books, a measure tantamount to the complete repeal of the prohibition. Even Liu Pang, despite his contempt of learning, had already sanctioned Hsiao Ho's construction of a library called the Tower of the Stone Canal for the storing of what was left of ancient manuscripts. The Empress Lü was therefore only continuing a line of policy initiated in the preceding reign.

Ssü ma Ch'ien, though giving a full list of her murders, testifies

"that the country enjoyed peace under her, that neither punishments nor criminals were numerous, that the people could devote themselves to sowing and reaping, thus securing ample sufficiency of food and clothes."

In 190 she completed the work of surrounding Ch'ang-an with strong ramparts, a highly necessary precaution, for Mo-tun's horses were grazing within 240 miles of the Han Palaces, and on Kao Ti's death, his Immensity the Northern Son of Heaven even conceived the project of uniting the two Empires under one sway by marrying the Southern Son of Heaven's widow. He actually proposed to the lady, writing :

"I, a lonely monarch, incapable of standing on my own feet, born between lakes and rivers, reared in wide plains amidst horses and cattle, often tarried on the borderland, wishing to cross over once and visit the Middle Kingdom. You dwell there now lonely and desolate. . . . Neither of us two rulers finds much to give us pleasure. I therefore suggest our union."

The Empress-Dowager felt highly insulted. The second marriage of a widow, even with a man of her own standing, was considered most unseemly, and this Mo-tun was merely a cattle-thief and a barbarian. She wanted to behead his messenger and mobilize an army to invade his country.

But the wisest of her councillors warned her that those wounded at P'ing-ch'êng when the late Emperor narrowly escaped capture by this same Mo-tun, had not yet recovered, and that the people were still singing the doggerel made on that humiliating occasion :

"In P'ing-ch'êng there ruled fierce distress :  
Seven days we had naught to eat,  
And no chance to bend our bows."

As neither the advances nor the insults of barbarians mattered much, it would be folly to plunge into the uncertainties and expense of war. On the strength of these arguments the Dowager swallowed her anger and answered the Hun's proposal with elaborate politeness :

" Your Majesty has not forgotten my lowly residence but honoured it with a letter. My lowly residence is now shaken with fear. . . . I am aged and short of breath, hair and teeth fall out, my steps have lost their buoyancy. . . . Blame not my lowly residence for this but vouchsafe it your forgiveness. . . . I, unworthy of you, possess two imperial chariots each with a team of four horses. I offer you these to drive about in always."

Mo-tun now apologized for his indiscretion, sent the inconsolable widow a gift of horses, receiving in exchange a Han princess, teeth, hair and breath presumably in better shape than those of the Dowager. Peace was maintained, at least the kind of peace usually observed between hard-working farmers unprotected by a strong army and hard-riding freebooters unrestrained by any sense of the rights of others.

Twice under the Empress Lü raids were so severe, the Hiung nu stormed a fort and dragged 2,000 Chinese away into bondage. She had to close her eyes to these humiliations because the imperial forces, their old generals all replaced by her highly unpopular kinsmen, could not be trusted to fight with much vigour beyond the Great Wall. Moreover, she needed them round the capital to squash the risings by the Liu party against her favourites, which she dreaded would occur the moment death deprived the latter of her protection. And death in a weird shape had marked her down.

In the middle of the third moon (April-May, 180) she had, according to a custom prevalent at that period, gone to perform some ritual lustrations in a stream to the north-east of Ch'ang-an. On the return journey " a creature resembling a blue dog was seen. It bit her in the side, then suddenly vanished. The oracles declared it was the young King of Chao whom she had slain."

" Then the Empress wife of Kao fell ill of her wound at the side." The sixth moon her sickness increased, and on the day of the Serpent she collapsed.

Wide awake to the last, she had taken care to leave the Lüs in strong positions : a child Emperor of her creation on the throne with a Lü, a grandniece of hers, as his little Empress wife ; one of her nephews, Lü Lu, commander-in-chief of the northern, another, Lü Chan, in control of the southern army and of the seal of the dynasty, and Lüs or creatures of the Lüs in



almost every important office. However, she seems to have been the only one of her family capable of swift action in emergencies. Her nephews, who really had their enemies at their mercy, wasted time and opportunity in deliberations and indecisions. Their younger aunt Lü Siu, sharing some of her sister's energetic temper, got so angry with them she dragged "all her pearls, jewels and precious utensils out of their boxes, dashed them to the ground in her hall, exclaiming she would not preserve them for strangers."

Liu Chang, a nephew of Liu Pang's, whom the Empress-Dowager had fancied reduced to harmlessness by his marriage with one of her great-nieces, a daughter of Lü Lu, on the contrary became the most active member of the anti-Lü faction. He sent word to his eldest brother, King of Ch'i, to hurry what forces he could muster West, in order to attack the Lües from without, while he and his party would attack them from within. The King of Ch'i gladly did so. The troops sent against him declined to fight. Next, Lü Lu allowed himself to be tricked out of his control of the northern army. Its soldiers being asked by their new commander, Chou P'o, to bare their right arm if they were for the Lües, and their left one if they sided with the Lius, with one accord bared their left arm. A series of swift and skilful moves cornered Lü Chan, commander of the southern army, in the Palace courtyard: "A violent wind blew from heaven," threw his followers into dire confusion, and prevented their defending him. Whereupon he was ignominiously slain in the privy in which he had tried to conceal himself.

The triumphant Chou P'o, the old spirit of anarchy thoroughly re-aroused in this ex-trumpeter at funerals, at once set about providing the grave-diggers with jobs by tracking down all the Lües and slaying them without mercy, "men and women, young and old." Lü Lu was beheaded, his aunt Lü Siu beaten to death. Hesitation had cost them dear. The little Emperor at first remained unharmed, for he of course was supposed to be a Liu. However, very soon the Liu party decided to depose him, since being a nominee of the Empress Lü, he might, on growing up, wish to avenge the massacre of her family. This at once raised the question of whom to put in his place. There were three possible candidates, namely Liu Hsiang, King of Ch'i, a grandson, and Liu Chang, King of Huai-nan, a son of the founder of the dynasty; only both these were on their mother's side related to people potentially just as dangerous as the detested Lües.

This narrowed the choice down to Liu Hêng, King of T'ai, fourth son of the founder and older than the King of Huai-nan,

who was the seventh son. Moreover "his goodness and filial piety were well known, and his mother's family, the P'us, high-principled and mindful of their duties."

It was to him, therefore, that the emergency government dispatched messengers requesting him to accept the dignity of a Son of Heaven. After declining this honour the prescribed number of times, he drove off to Ch'ang-an.

About the middle of November, 180, he reached the bridge across the Wei, where all the great nobles and officials met him, and kneeling at his feet offered him the seal of the Empire. But "cautious as a fox" he still wanted to probe the ground before committing himself, and first went to the mansion he, like all vassal Kings, possessed in the capital. Besides, the palace was still occupied by the Dowager Lü's little Emperor.

Hsiao Ho and Liu Hsing Kiu, a brother of the King of Ch'i, undertook to clear him out, together with other fictitious sons of Hui Ti. Shortly after their removal the poor lads guilty of no crime but the one of being in everybody's way were all murdered.



## CHAPTER V

### CONSOLIDATION

**M**EANWHILE the King of T'ai, having been repeatedly assured that he was the worthiest and most indispensable for taking over the insignia of a Son of Heaven as well as the care of Kao Ti's ancestral temple, yielded to the entreaties of "the imperial family, the generals, councillors, Kings and nobles," and in the evening took possession of the Palace of Wei Yang. The same night he decreed a general amnesty, promotion of one degree in the official hierarchy to the heads of families and to their wives gifts of oxen and wine for distribution among groups of 100 households.

"There was to be feasting for five days."

The note of benevolence struck then was never dropped. Joined to a conscientious and intelligent devotion to his public duties, it made his reign of twenty-three years an extremely valuable epoch in the history of his dynasty and justly earned him the posthumous title of Hsiao Wên Ti, Reverend and Equitable Sovereign Lord, and the temple name of the Illustrious Ancestor, Tai Tsung, his father Liu Pang being the Glorious Founder, Kao Tsu.

Under him the curious custom was started of dating a reign not merely by the chronological number of its years, but by periods named after some event of good omen, like the finding of an ancient urn, or by designations setting forth an optimistic programme of its general policy. At one time he also considered the idea of a reform of the calendar and allowed the original unity of the worship of Heaven to be somewhat blurred by erecting a temple to the five Lords of Space and offering a separate sacrifice to each. But his achievements lie elsewhere. Called to the throne on the strength of his reputation for filial piety and benevolence, the glory of their firm establishment as the ideally permanent basis of imperial power belongs to him.

Since the revolt against the Ch'ins had primarily been a revolt against the tyranny of its officials and reached a triumphant issue through a son of the soil, the new dynasty had from

the first been founded widely and deeply on its sympathetic protection of the interests of the peasantry. Already as King of Han in 205 Liu Pang had embodied this sympathy in a very practical measure, decreeing that every hsiang or country district of 100 villages should be represented by a justice of the peace (*san lao*), not appointed from above, but elected by the people from among their most reputable fellow villagers of more than fifty years of age. Of these justices one was chosen to be head of the shire. An efficient make-weight against the arbitrariness of the professional bureaucracy was thus provided, and the popularity of the Hans assured. Further, Liu Pang, building for durability not for immediate but ephemeral splendour, taxed traders far more heavily than peasants.

Probably as a curb on the natural insolence and moral obliquity of war profiteers he excluded the merchant class from all official posts and prohibited their wearing silk or driving in carriages. This restriction was dropped by the Empress Lü, but the policy of favouring the essential industry continued.

Wên Ti even went so far as in 167 to abolish all "imposts and taxes weighing on fields" and demonstrated his interest in agriculture by reviving the beautiful ancient rite which bade the Son of Heaven plough by his own labour the field consecrated to the temple offerings, and his wife pluck the mulberry leaves and attend to the silk-worms with her own hands. Revival of ancient rites and ideas was altogether much the fashion, partly as the inevitable reaction against Shih Huang Ti's bigoted iconoclasm, Li Ssü's fanatical craze for novelty and the brutalities engendered by the subsequent turmoil, partly as the outcome of the renewed study of the proscribed books. The moment the ban against them was lifted the search for the survival of the old literature became an all-absorbing passion.

In secret vaults, in dim recesses and dark tombs ancient texts were discovered. Not only did they come back hallowed by a crown of martyrdom and the pricelessness of rarity, but what they taught answered so completely the prime need of the times that where originals had been mutilated or lost they were freely reconstructed. An immense work began of collecting, copying, studying, translating them, not only from the ancient to the modern script, but from learned theory into living practice.

Then for the first time it clothed itself in flesh and blood, walked the streets, sat in schools, in council halls, in camps, moved in courts and cottages, became the standard by which careers were shaped, admired or condemned what originally had been vision or remembrance of some glorious sovereigns, then



the sustaining hope of sages, K'ung Tzū's great ideal of the Chün tze, a term which could be rendered by gentleman if it did not also mean the courageous citizen "who hungers and thirsts for the public good" and the selfless thinker, master of his own spirit, whether sovereign or subject, wealthy or poor, in office or out, because deeply anchored in the cosmic laws of righteousness.

Just as the translation of the Bible leavened all classes with the ferment of the fear of God, rousing men to a new consciousness of responsibility and individual worth, so the re-editing of the ancient wisdom sounded the clarion-call of true citizenship, loving, reverend, sincere, just, consonant with the divine order of the world. All that was noblest responded; all that was mean slunk out of sight; all that was weary of military tyranny and individual licence rallied round this discipline, stern, yet full of understanding, absolute, but luminous with benign and patient reason. It bound men in the restraint of beautiful and profoundly symbolical forms and set them free in the safety of general acceptance of a lofty moral code. Political and social ambitions were drained away from the miasmatic swamp of self-aggrandisement into the clear channels of loyalty to a strenuous but not impracticable ideal, the walking on the royal road, in the ancient Empire reserved to the One, then to nobles, now thrown open to the many. The Wang Tao (King's Road) became the Jen Tao (the road of man). Whoever honestly adhered to it, were he never so poor and humbly born, could attain the highest posts. This answered Liu Pang's call for "soldiers strong to guard the four quarters," supplied his dynasty with that staff of brilliant generals, of capable and honest officials without whom no strong government can last, and 600 years after his death gave K'ung Tzū in the best of the Hans what he had vainly sought during his life, rulers who would use him and to some extent materialize the magic of the old conception of the Sovereign transmitting the blessings of Heaven and the gifts of Earth to the people entrusted to his care by virtue of his own and his ministers' worthiness.

Though the generation had not yet quite passed away, which grown great by war had "poured the people's bowels and brains out on the soil" and lived by force and cunning, such flashes of inspiration leapt out of the rediscovered wisdom of the great sages, a powerful wave towards moral earnestness, a strong humanitarian current were immediately released. These joined to the war weariness of the masses and their overwhelming desire for peace represented a force the Emperor used to mitigate the harshness of the existing laws often despite the apathy or

opposition of the majority and of the promptings of their own blood.

Taking up the changes introduced in this direction by the Empress Lü, Wên Ti in 178 prohibited the enslavement of a condemned criminal's family and repealed the Ch'in edict prohibiting all comments on the government. In 167, studying the old ballad in the She Ching which calls the Sovereign the father and mother of the people, its magnet and its point of rest, he declared that the cruel mutilations like cutting off the nose or a foot in use in the law-courts were incompatible with the spirit of the She Ching and must be abolished. Which was done. Pounding of rice and the bastinado were substituted. Presently, however, experience showed that this reform intended to mitigate, had actually sharpened punishments, for the regulation number of blows were applied so ruthlessly that if the victim got off alive, which did not happen often, his whole body was battered beyond hope of recovery.

Therefore Wên Ti's successor Ch'ing Ti reduced the maximum number from 500 to 300, and the minimum number from 300 to 200. After twelve years' trial it was found necessary to make further reductions. The maximum was brought down to 200, the minimum to 100 blows. The size and quality of the rod, too, was carefully regulated, only smooth bamboo free of all notches and not over one inch thick being allowed. This produced the desired effect and the bastinado became what Wên Ti had intended it to be, a light punishment, with just enough sting to rouse earnest resolutions of reform in the heart of the recipient. In a further effort to translate the spirit of the sacred canon into action he enjoined judges to err on the side of leniency rather than on that of severity.

But there were occasions when the hot, impetuous, choleric Han blood in his veins revolted against leniency and clamoured for revenge. Once a man passing under a bridge just as the imperial carriage was driving over it made the horses shy. Brought before the judge he was merely fined. Wên Ti angrily protested against so mild a sentence. However, when told it was the one fixed by law, and that to go beyond the law in a purely personal matter meant the undermining of the people's faith in justice, he admitted that the judge was right, not he.

Another time a burglar had broken into Kao Ti's memorial temple, carrying off some jade. Tried by this same judge, Chang Shih-chih, the culprit was condemned to be beheaded. The Emperor, indignant at the desecration of his father's shrine and forgetting his own laws passed in calmer moments, demanded that the punishment be raised to the height of his



fury and the man's whole family wiped out. The judge bowed very low but remained very firm, again taking his stand on fearless, accurate and absolutely impartial application of the established code. And Wên Ti, who really appreciated the value of a legal standard impervious to caprice or passion, again curbed the vindictive surging of his blood and allowed the law to be observed.

He likewise suffered the caution of his advisers to restrain his temperamental recklessness, curtailed his hunting of tigers and bears, gave up his habit of driving his team of six horses full tilt down steep inclines and at the bidding of his mother the Dowager-Empress, no doubt mindful of the misadventure at P'ing Ch'êng, desisted from leading the army in person against the Hiung nu. The same old lady, like many Empress-Dowagers before or after her, flashing out of the seclusion of the inner Palace to smite disturbers of dynastic usage with a guardian angel's flaming sword, made him once apologize to her on bended knees and head uncovered for not having brought up his sons with proper care. Two of them, namely, the Prince Imperial and the King of Liang, driving back to the Palace, had failed to alight at the Gate of the Horse Guards as etiquette required, and for this lapse of good manners had been arrested by the stern and fearless Chang Shih-chih. For the third generation already to revert to the clodhopper stage was too dangerous an experiment while the Han tradition was still a puny fledgling needing all the brooding care of experienced dames and devoted councillors to assist it to maturity.

This also Wên Ti fully understood and on his side guarded against the opposite peril besetting new dynasties, display and extravagance. Simplicity and economy were the rule of his household. He "always wore coarse black silk and did not allow his favourite wife to have long trains to her dresses, or elaborate embroideries on her curtains."

"After twenty-three years on the throne he had added nothing to his palaces, or his parks, his hounds or his horses, his robes or his carriages. Once he felt tempted to build a Terrace of the Morning Dew, but when told it would cost 100 pounds of gold he exclaimed: '100 pounds, that is the whole income of ten families, I do not need that terrace.'" For his sepulchre on the river Pa "he only used terra-cotta, excluding all ornaments in gold, silver, copper or tin. Neither would he erect a high tumulus, so as to spare the people's toil." He refused to accept costly presents, and in times of famine opened the public granaries, gave his horses to the service of the imperial post, remitted tribute and in order to raise funds allowed the purchase of titles.

Though this sounds like a mere pandering to human vanity, it possessed a deeper purpose.

To strengthen the central authority against the separatist proclivities of the vassal Kingdoms it was necessary to build up a non-territorial nobility looking exclusively to the court for its importance and the validity of its titles. Of course merit should have been its only foundation, but with time pressing and expenses always threatening to overbalance resources it was impossible to be very squeamish. Besides, any measure facilitating promotion was in keeping with the policy of the Hans, whose merit it is to have carried out one of the most brilliant and successful experiments of democratization on record. Starting from the plus vitality of ambition, not the minus one of envy, they never thought of pulling down the old distinctions of titles and learning, on the contrary they enhanced their significance and splendour. What they did was to pull the lower classes up and into the highest ranks. They destroyed nothing, they only smoothed the approaches and widened the doors to preferment. Thus for all their easygoing ways they succeeded, where the Ch'ins with all their energy and ruthlessness had failed. But naturally complications would from time to time arise involving struggle and the sternest action. The demon of disloyalty put up its snake-fanged head in their very midst.

Wên Ti's nephew, Liu Hsing Kiu, unmindful of the gifts with which he had been rewarded for his share in destroying the Lües, gifts consisting of an estate of 2,000 hearths, 1,000 pounds of gold and latterly even a Kingdom, that of Chi pei, was besides so unmindful of the country's interests that he chose the moment when the Emperor had his hands full with military preparations against the Hiung nu, to create a rebellion in his rear. In less than two months it was crushed, but the punitive expedition against the common enemy which Wên Ti had planned could not be carried out, and in consequence the Northern Son of Heaven grew more immense than ever.

Liu Chang, King of Huai-nan, was the next to cause trouble. He never forgot that when the Dragon throne was empty, his half-brother Liu Hêng spoiled his chances of filling it, and soon began to devise schemes by which he hoped to gratify his thwarted ambition after all. As regardless of the general good as the King of Chi pei, he plotted with northern and southern barbarians, drove several imperial officers out of his dominions, slew a few others, promulgated laws of his own, and generally behaved as if the anarchic days of local independence were in full swing again. But his calendar was out of date.

Imperial authority proved fully strong enough to bring him



to the bar of its judgment-seat at Ch'ang-an. The assembled ministers condemned him to execution on the market-place. Wên Ti, unwilling to expose a member of his family to such a humiliation, commuted the sentence into one of exile to the extreme south-western frontier in modern Szê Chuan. The journey was a long one and, performed in a wheeled cage, a frightful ordeal, a more frightful one than Liu Chang could face. He hunger-struck and died, a serious indiscretion, as it knocked a nasty hole in his brother's reputation for filial piety and benevolence. To patch this up, Wên Ti gave him a princely burial, assigned thirty families to look after his grave, and though for the sake of letting the ancestors know under what provocation he had exiled their descendant, he posthumously dubbed him Li Wang the Cruel King, he endowed the dead man's three sons with Kingdoms, giving Huai-nan to the eldest, Hêng Shan to the second, Lu Kiang to the third, in clear proof of his adherence to the dictates of magnanimity, preached by the ancient sages.

His application of their principles to foreign politics is even more remarkable, for that is a domain which nations, priding themselves on their championship of humanity and justice, to this day consider an asylum wherein the most savage cruelty and cunning, long ago forbidden in all other human relationships, can prowl about at large, unchecked and unashamed.

Shih Huang Ti, whose views on these as every other matter were the complete opposite of those held by Wên Ti, had brought the clatter of his victorious arms into the vast and imperfectly known regions, washed by the southern sea, peopled them with forcibly deported Chinese colonists, and declared them all as far as Annam, part and parcel of the Ch'in Empire.

But when this went to pieces, Chao T'o, one of his officers on garrison duty in the newly conquered territory, caught the general infection and started asking himself whether he was not also of the seed of which Kings are made. Both the geographical and the political circumstances proving favourable, he answered the question with an emphatic affirmative, broke off all relation with what was left of imperial authorities, replaced them by his own and proclaimed himself King Wu of Nan Yüeh, a territory embracing the southern maritime provinces of modern China. He founded Canton to be his residence.

When the Empire was set on its feet again, Liu Pang, anxious not to be burdened with enemies on his southern as well as on his northern frontier, and with an eye to future colonial expansion, sent Chao T'o a friendly embassy under Liu Chia, so skilful

a diplomat he drew the Kingdom of Nan Yüeh into the net of Han overlordship by the softest threads of silk.

The Empress Lü, however, jealous of its rapidly increasing prosperity, laid an embargo on the export to Nan Yüeh of Chinese agricultural implements, cattle, horses, sheep, especially female ones. To Chao T'o's indignant protests she turned a deaf ear. Whereupon he attacked her subject, the King of Chang cha, seizing by force what meanness tried to withhold from him. He also began to drive about in an imperial chariot lined with yellow and adorned on the left side with the tail of a yak, to let the whole world know he had as good a claim to the empire as the wicked old woman at Ch'ang-an. Highly enraged she dispatched an army against him. The hot damp climate beat it. It turned back decimated by malaria.

When Wên Ti assumed control and heard of all these things, he ordered the graves of Chao T'o's ancestral tombs, located near Cheng-ting (Chihli), to be repaired and honoured with a yearly sacrifice, summoned his brothers to his court and lavished favours upon them, in every way showing his desire to live up to the great Lao Tzŭ's doctrine of returning good for evil. He also called Lu Chia out of the retirement to which the Empress Lü's small-minded policy had driven him, and sent him South again with full powers to renew the former settlement. In the letter he gave him, he pointed out all the futile cruelty of war :

"The southern districts suffer great distress. What good will your campaign do you? Even if it ends victoriously, it will inflict death or wounds on many of your officers and men; deprive many wives of their husbands, many children of their fathers. I will not fight you. If I conquered your country, it would not enrich me. Keep it, but do not call yourself Emperor. I will not quarrel with you, for well-bred men avoid contention. Let us renew for ever the friendly relations that bound us before."

These arguments, losing none of their force by Lu Chia's way of presenting them, touched Chao T'o's heart. With many apologies he dropped his imperial pretensions, withdrew his armies and to the end of his days maintained the friendly co-operation which enriches neighbouring states infinitely more than the most triumphant wars. And his pacifism agreed with him personally, for he missed completing a whole century by only three years, having been born in 234 and dying in 137.

In his case Wên Ti had had to deal with a man of culture and understanding. His attempts to convert his northern neighbours to the principles of Lao Tzŭ did not meet with so ready a response, for in the Hiung nu he struck the incorrigible strain of hunters of men and animals to whom peace is synony-



mous with weakness and boredom. He had barely been on the throne three years before, despite his own peaceful dispositions and abundant and regular payment of blackmail, the nomads surged across the Huang Ho slaying, stealing, setting on fire. As he indignantly protested :

“ Right up to the wall our officers and soldiers have been captured or slain, tribes guarding our frontiers driven from their old dwelling-places ; wardens of the marches crushed beneath Hiung nu cart wheels. Thereby the most outrageous breach of treaties and lapse from the Tao have been committed. Attend therefore to this command. All the mounted forces of the border provinces to the number of 85,000 men are to take the field at once.”

But his nephew's rebellion gave him work elsewhere. Nevertheless, the armed demonstration seems to have caused the Hiung nu to aim their arrows at more defenceless victims. They fell on the Yüeh chi, “ beheaded, butchered or subdued them all,” and rounded off their conquests in the West by wholesale incorporations of defeated Lo lans, Wu suns and twenty-six neighbouring principalities. After which achievement Mo-tun, with the post-prandial pacifism of a boa constrictor, made one of his Chinese slaves draw up a long letter to Wên Ti, beginning :

“ His Immensity of the Hiung nu raised to the throne by Heaven inquires respectfully whether the Sovereign Lord is free from care. Formerly we negotiated about peaceful and friendly relations . . . at which I rejoiced. . . . But then the Han authorities in the marches behaved insolently towards mine. . . . This caused a breach in our brotherly understanding. . . . Now that all the people drawing the bow are united in one family and the northern lands are firmly in my power, I desire to lay down my arms to allow my officers and troops to rest and my horses to recover. Therefore let us renew our former agreement, that the border population may enjoy peace consonant with the beginning of antiquity, giving youths the chance of growing up and the aged the possibility of remaining in their homes. . . . I beg to offer you one camel, two riding horses and two four-in-hand teams for your carriages. . . .”

Wên Ti, whose pacifism did *not* depend on the state of his digestion, in reply expressed profound admiration for Mo-tun's letter, honouring as it did the principles of the holy rulers of antiquity. He heartily endorsed his desire for the resumption of amicable relations.

In token of his good-will he sent him :

“ Ten rolls of embroidered silk, thirty of multi-coloured brocade ; forty of heavy, plain red, and forty of green silk ” ; further as a special souvenir : “ An embroidered, unwadded robe, lined with flowered silk ”—he had worn himself ; “ a long tunic, embroidered and unwadded ; an unwadded cloak in

variegated brocade ; a comb ; a belt studded with gold and a golden buckle."

The combined effect of these gifts, of repletion and old age lulled Mo-tun into peacefulness to the end of his days. He died in 173 and Kajuk, also called Lao Shang, the son who succeeded him, began by continuing his policy. Wên Ti at once sent him a Han princess to add to the joys of his accession, and Chung Hang yueh, the eunuch in charge of her retinue.

This despicable fellow was so incensed at having to exchange the luxuries of the Ch'ang-an palace for the discomfort of felt tents in the steppes, that he vowed revenge on the Emperor who had considered his feelings so little. Worming himself into Kajuk's favour he fanned his ambition, prompting him to actively resume his father's plans of a Hiung nu World Empire lording it over that of the Hans. Where these used a tablet one foot and one inch long for their diplomatic correspondence, he was to use one of a foot and two inches adorned with larger seals. He also was to start his letters in grander style, thus :

"The majestic Jenuye of the Hiung nu to whom Heaven and Earth have given life, the Sun and the Moon their mandate, respectfully inquires if the Lord of Han is free from cares."

The respectful inquiry was by no means sincere, for in the winter of 166 Kajuk cheerfully loaded all the cares he could on the Han Emperor's back, invading his country with 140,000 freebooters. They stormed the forts in Kansu, defeated and slew the wardens of the marches, killed or carried off men and cattle, plundered and destroyed everything on their wild passage, penetrated almost as far South as the Wei, burnt the palace of Hui Chung near the old Ch'in residence of Yung, and made the citizens of Ch'ang-an cower in terror behind the Empress Lü's walls.

Fortunately the southern Son of Heaven had soldiers too. A thousand chariots, cavalry 100,000 strong, answered his call to arms. From all directions they gathered, Wên Ti encouraging them with his presence, harangues and gifts. Kajuk swiftly withdrew, so swiftly indeed that, as the chronicle regretfully remarks, the Han army dashing after him in hot pursuit well beyond the Wall, had to return home without a chance of butchering any Hiung nus at all.

Consequently for several years at the first onset of the cold when their horses were in good condition, their bows taut, the summer harvest gathered in the Chinese barns, by the light of the full moon, the dreaded horsemen swarmed in looting and killing to their heart's content.

To remedy this disastrous state of affairs Ch'ao Ts'o, tutor



to the Prince Imperial and a man of such wide knowledge he was nicknamed the Wisdom-Bag, came forward with a well-considered scheme for a root and branch reform of the system of border defence, the present one clearly proving inadequate.

The garrisoning of the Great Wall forts was no longer to be left to raw recruits sent there from a great distance and changed every year, never giving them time to learn the wiles of the Hiung nu or to get over their dread of this terrible enemy. It was to be entrusted to yeomen who were to be attracted to the frontier by liberal grants of land, the government at first also supplying them with houses, walled refuges, farming implements, clothes and food, till they were able to stand on their own feet. They would form a living barrier of sturdy semi-colonial militia men who having their own homes to defend could be relied on to put up a much more courageous and intelligent resistance than the rabble of convicts, slaves and miscellaneous riff-raff hitherto employed for that purpose.

To provide these military farms with the necessary security and on the principle that barbarians are best fought by barbarians, the first line of defence was to be given to tribes who had voluntarily submitted to the Chinese. Being fully equal to the attacking Hiung nu in physical endurance, they were to be made their superiors by providing them with the full equipment of Chinese archers, the padded cuirasses, the bows which shot further, the swords which were sharper than those of the enemy nomads. Wên Ti ordered these reforms to be introduced. In addition he appealed to Kajuk for peace, sending envoys in such numbers and such swift succession "that they never lost sight of each other's official hats and umbrellas, and that the traces of their carriage wheels intermingled on the road."

At last, in 162, they obtained a favourable response, either because Ch'ao Ts'o's scheme was beginning to take effect or because there was nothing left to loot. Anyhow, instead of inflicting the southern Son of Heaven with further raids, the northern one sent him a present of two horses and promises of renewed friendliness. In a long letter of grateful acknowledgment Wên Ti wrote:

"My imperial predecessors decreed that the principalities of the bowmen north of the Long Wall should obey the Jenuye. I myself have decreed that within the Long Wall the Wearers of the caps and girdles shall exhort all the inhabitants to plough and weave, shoot and hunt so that they can clothe and feed themselves and sons remain with their fathers and magistrates and chieftains preserve concord and abstain from violence. Unfortunately sundry miscreants from lust of booty . . . regardless of the lives of thousands caused a breach in our friendship. . . . However, this is past. Your letter states that

amity is restored between the two Kingdoms . . . which fills me with joy. . . . Let us walk the Tao of the Saints of old . . . and vouchsafe our people our compassionate care. . . . The Hans and the Hiung nus, though neighbour states, show marked contrasts. The latter, situated in the North, early suffer from deadly cold. Therefore I have instructed my officials to send you rice, malt, brocade, spun silk and raw and sundry other things annually in definite quantities. . . . I have heard that Heaven covers all men without favouritism, that without partiality Earth supports them all. Now I and the Jenuye will cast from us our former paltry misunderstandings and both walk on the great Road. . . . Then the countless myriads of the people as well as the fishes and tortoises living in the deep, and the birds flying in the height, together with every species of animals, those moving like insects, breathing through beaks or crawling like reptiles, will without exception reach a state of peace and prosperous growth sheltered from danger. Thus the future will be one with the eternal Tao of Heaven. I have heard that the sovereigns of old made clear and unambiguous treaties and never swallowed their plighted word. Since it is the Jenuye's will that universal peace prevail, now that friendly relations have been established between us the first breach will not proceed from Han. Give this, I pray, your closest attention."

Which Kajuk did. But his walks on the great Road with Wên Ti do not seem to have agreed with him. In two years he was dead and his son and successor, Kyundjin, full of the vain-gloriousness of youth, did not fancy this arm-in-arm promenading at all.

In the winter of 159-158 he broke loose, sent 60,000 free-booters in two detachments raiding across the border—"killing and capturing vast numbers of people." Evidently Ch'ao Ts'o's reforms were not effective along the whole length of the Wall. But good organization is nevertheless apparent, for there was no break in the chain of signal-fires flaming up their urgent warning all the way from the frontier forts to the capital, and no delay in the response. A number of camps under able generals sprang up to arrest and repel the invaders. The Emperor went round himself to inspect them.

In two he was received with full court ceremonial, but when he drove up at the one commanded by Chou Ya-fu, a son of Chou P'o, the ex-trumpeter at funerals, inexorable sentries refused admittance without their commander's special leave. Nor would they allow the imperial chariot to proceed at a trot, because, according to Chou Ya-fu's orders, trotting and cantering were strictly forbidden inside the camp so as not to raise tell-tale clouds of dust. Next, Chou Ya-fu himself, on receiving the Emperor, only gave him a military salute, explaining that according to the rites, an officer under arms must not prostrate himself. The courtiers stared aghast, but Wên Ti saw the force of the argument and declared that the stern discipline in Chou



蜀主劉備



MINOR HAN CHAO LICH TI (LIU PI) (162-223 A.D.)





Ya-fu's camp showed him to be his best general, and one whom the enemy would never find napping.

Whether on account of Chou Ya-fu's vigilance or because of a sufficiency of loot, in a few weeks' time the Hiung nu galloped home to their native wilds and what was left of the border colonists crept back to resume the endless struggle between peaceful industry and armed brigandage. Only Wên Ti, worn out by all his labours, gave up the fight. Feeling the approach of the end he drew up a long testament :

"In the Universe among all creatures which multiply and are born none escape death. It is their natural destiny, the law of Heaven and of Earth. Wherefore repine? . . . I have had the good fortune to complete my allotted span of years and shall now in my turn receive the offerings in the Temple of my exalted ancestors. When my lack of merit receives such a reward, what ground is there for sorrow? Therefore I order all my officials and subjects throughout the Empire that they go forth and lament for three days only, then put aside the clothes and interdictions of mourning. As to those in charge of the funeral ceremonies, let them not walk barefoot, neither shall their mourning bands exceed three inches. The chariots and weapons shall not be covered with white linen. . . . Of the wailers in the Palace fifteen shall lift up their voices in the morning and fifteen in the evening and there shall be no other wailing at all. . . . Deep mourning shall be worn fifteen, half-mourning fourteen, thin linen seven days, then it shall be put away. . . . All my concubines below the second rank shall be sent back to their homes. The mountain and the water courses of the sepulchre of Pa shall not be changed."

The sepulchre had not to wait for him long. In the sixth month of the twenty-third year of his reign (157) in his palace on the sunny banks of the Wei in the heat of July the great cold of death came upon him, though he was only forty-six.

A week later his eldest surviving son Liu Ch'i by right of heredity assumed the title of sovereign Lord in the temple of the Exalted Ancestor. He is known by his posthumous title of Ching Ti, the Luminous Lord, which can only have been given him on the ground that it is wrong to say anything but good of the dead, for he shone in nothing except careful and acquisitive management of financial matters. Though at first he could not do enough to honour his father's memory, ordering his eulogy to be inscribed on bamboo and silk and a special ritual dance of Resplendent Virtue to be performed in his Temple in commemoration of his great merits, his own reign was an unbroken reaction against the generous liberalism of the preceding one. The tax of 1/30 of the produce of tilled fields abolished by Wên Ti was reimposed. The age limit within which youths were liable to labour conscription was extended from twenty-three to twenty.

The freedom of movement across passes and bridges granted by Wên Ti was again curtailed by the reintroduction of passports. Where Wên Ti had restrained the turbulence of the Liu royalties by increased generosity, Ching Ti drove them into revolt by added severities.

Already as Prince Imperial he had roused the enmity of Liu Pi, King of Wu, the son of the founder's eldest brother and first cousin to Wên Ti. Liu Pi's son paying a visit to Ch'ang-an, the two young men started quarrelling over a game of dice. The future Emperor, forgetting himself completely, seized the heavy board on which they were playing, hurled it at his cousin, felling him to the ground. Whereupon Liu Pi, justly indignant, refused to pay his respects at court again and prepared for revenge, a serious matter, since he was by far the wealthiest of all the Lius, wealthier than the Emperor himself. His salt monopoly and his copper mines, rendered all the more profitable on account of the free coinage allowed by Wên Ti, yielded such ample revenues he could dispense with taxes. Consequently his state was exceedingly attractive to settlers, and he had no difficulty in recruiting armed retainers in any quantity he fancied, obviously a state of things that needed careful watching.

Wên Ti, with his usual urbanity, prevented Liu Pi's resentment from assuming dangerous proportions by himself excusing him from further attendance at Court on the ground of advanced age, in consideration for which he solemnly granted him the privilege of the aged, the stool and the stick. This had the desired effect of smoothing down Liu Pi's ruffled feathers, but when Ching Ti, become Emperor, planned to clip some slices off his Kingdom, they rose again ominously. Every rascal, provided he could shoot, was made welcome in Wu, which soon had more than 200,000 men under arms.

Further, Liu Pi concluded an offensive and defensive league with six of his cousins, all endowed with royal fiefs in the Eastern provinces. Nominally it was directed against Ch'ao Ts'o, the minister who stood for an active policy of centralization, actually against the Emperor himself.

Frightened by all this sword rattling, complicated by an invasion of the Hiung nu acting in secret alliance with the rebel Kings, Ching Ti decided to buy peace at his unpopular minister's expense. Seized near the market-place as he was on his way to the Palace in full Court robes, Ch'ao Ts'o was executed then and there. Which may have brought peace to him. It did not bring any to his master. The wolves to whom he had thrown this valuable servant naturally now howled quite openly



for his own blood. Only after Chou Ya-fu's strategy had cut them off from their supplies did their howling change into whines for mercy.

But victors seldom forgive having been put into a panic. Ching Ti had three of his cousins, all brothers, executed, three others saved him this trouble by killing themselves, while the prime instigator, Liu Pi, fled across the Yangtze and was slain by his own people. Some of their Kingdoms were bestowed on the Emperor's sons, some rendered harmless by being divided or brought under the direct administration of the Crown. In due course of time, too, the wisdom of Ch'ao Ts'o's policy was recognized and the pruning knife applied to the overgrown privileges of the enfeigned Kings. Thus in 148 they were no longer allowed to keep a prime minister and in 145 their councillors had to drop the epithet of grand. But Chou Ya-fu, to whose loyalty and military skill Ching Ti owed the power of passing these measures, was perhaps for that very reason ignominiously hounded to his grave.

His son having acquired a breast-plate and a shield from the Imperial arsenal, Chou Ya-fu was ordered to exculpate himself before the Chief Justice. Outraged at this humiliation the old warrior had a violent hæmorrhage, refused food for five days and on the sixth day died.

The year before the Emperor's own son Liu Yung, whose nomination as heir-presumptive had against Chou Ya-fu's advice been taken from him on insufficient grounds, was on equally frivolous ones driven to commit suicide. Also without any justification but the whim of the moment, Ching Ti degraded his Empress P'u (151). Her place was soon taken by the concubine Wang, mother of the new heir-presumptive Liu Ch'ê.

Stained with capriciousness and ingratitude his reign was further and consequently, as was then believed, greatly troubled by an extraordinary number of physical calamities and commotions. The earth shook seven times; seven times the sun was eclipsed; three comets threatened in the sky; planets moved backwards; three times hail fell with alarming violence and volume, "the biggest stones measuring 1 foot and 18 inches." There was thunder in winter, lightning struck the big hall in the East Palace of Lo yang, locusts devoured the harvests, floods swept them away. Other years were cursed with droughts, famines, epidemics, barbarian invasions of which there were five, in spite of treaties and tribute and imperial princesses sent to wed the Hiung nu Khan. Finally, on the last day of the last month of what proved to be the last year

(10th February, 141) of the reign, the sun looked red and wrathful.

Four weeks later (9th March, 141) though only forty-eight, Ching Ti was dead. They buried him in the deep vault of the sepulchre called Yang Ling at which numbers of labourers, free men and convicts, had toiled for nine years. In the stormy passage of the centuries he became "the dust of ridges and hills" and would be quite forgotten had he not been the father of Liu Ch'ê, known as the Martial Lord, Wu Ti.



## CHAPTER VI

### HAN WU TI

**C**ALLED to the throne at the early age of sixteen, Wu Ti dominated the Middle Kingdom in his headstrong, impulsive yet magnificent style for fifty-four years, in many ways for almost twenty centuries. For his reign marks the apex of that live formative period, that gigantic upward thrust of a thousand latent energies and tendencies, the period of the Early Hans ; the greatest height reached since that most wondrous height of all the dawn of Chinese culture.

It was an age of revival and remembrance in so far as it opened with the recovery and loving study of the thoughts and actions of the past. It was an age of original creation in so far as innumerable ideas and methods in philosophy, art, poetry, music, history, tradition, religion, politics, hitherto floating about vaguely and embryonically, were systematized and given the form subsequently enlarged or modified, but never wholly abandoned. Greedy of distance, space and strength, it was an age of expansion on the physical plane, thrusting out a mighty arm between the nomads of the steppes and the barbarians of the highlands, stretching inquisitive fingers out West through the Tarim Basin to Bactria, Persia, the Caspian Sea, South to the trade-routes between India and Canton, while flinging another arm out North-east to grapple with Korea. It was an age of exploration on the spiritual plane, searching for Gods in the stars of Heaven, for knowledge of the Beyond in the trances of mediums, for immortality in the herbs of the soil and the flames of the furnace. Yet it was sure of itself, well-poised, safely anchored in its creeds ; its picture of the Universe complete, harmonious, unassailably true as these pictures always are so long as the faith in them holds fast. Earth had its Middle Kingdom, its eight wilds and distances and peaks ; Heaven its four palaces for each of the seasons. The movements of the luminaries through these around one immovable pivot, the polar star, was at last again clearly reflected in the political unification on earth around one imperial centre. Wherefore harmony

and happiness, success and concord must of necessity prevail. And they did.

The age of the Early Hans was opulent and loved to dwell in palaces with lofty terraces and towers, to ride in sumptuous carriages drawn by fiery thoroughbreds, to clothe itself in gorgeous silks, to express itself in florid poetry or flowing prose, in vibrant music, in vigorous sculpture, in colourful painting, in magnificent rites. It was ambitious, assertive, domineering, inquiring, proud of its knowledge and possessions with an exuberance of energy enabling it insatiably to reach out for more. It rejoiced in life and the whole fullness of its passions and knew no shrinking from any of its depths or heights. It would wallow in blood to slake its hatreds, sob the dead out of their graves, it clung to them with such intensity of love. It counted the value of things in pounds of gold and the worth of men by solid achievement, and Wu Ti, both intellectually and emotionally built on too large a scale to be judged by the standards applicable to ordinary men, was its fit embodiment and King. One day he would take pleasure in the discourses and admonitions of scholars and sages, the next and all night through dash along rough mountain-sides, through forests and fields, trample down standing corn and in queer disguises with a troop of boon companions break into houses in quest of adventures, track a tiger to his lair, "throttle bears and boars with his own hands."

In one mood he composed tender lyrics on the melancholy of autumn winds, white clouds and waves or on the loss of his beautiful favourite Li Fu jen :

"The rustle of her silken skirt is still,  
Soundless her empty room and chill;  
Dust gathers on the marble floor;  
Dead leaves pile up against the door;  
My heart is heavy with the pain  
Of yearning for the one I fain  
Would see again."

In quite another mood in the bitter cold of winter (110) he marched at the head of 180,000 troopers beyond the Great Wall right into Hiung nu territory and sent their ruler a swift messenger with a defiant challenge :

"The head of the King of Nan Yüeh hangs on the northern gate of the Han Palace. Should you still be capable of fighting, the Son of Heaven himself awaits you at the frontier. Otherwise come quickly and submit to him. Why have you run away so far, hiding in the wretched waterless and herbless regions North of the flowing sands? No doubt because your strength is gone."



This bravado seems to have had no other effect but to make the Jenuye exercise his men and horses with particular care well beyond the reach of Wu Ti's arrows, who consequently returned to his capital without any Hiung nu heads for the decoration of his Palace gates. Nevertheless, it was a bold gesture and if it failed to frighten the barbarians, it put life and courage into the Chinese garrisons, demonstrating the Emperor's personal interest in this vital problem of the frontier defence. Indeed to wipe out the disgrace of P'ing ch'êng was the project nearest his heart. From the very beginning he realized that the prime need for its execution was an unlimited supply of bold, resourceful, able officers. Therefore already in 138 he issued a proclamation ordering all "district governors to search for men of brilliant and unusual talents to be his generals, ministers and envoys to distant states."

The response was more than adequate. Evidently the general prosperity and the revival of learning were producing numbers of young men who could answer Wu Ti's call in the words used by Tung-fang So:

"At twelve I learned to write and within the year was well advanced in history and composition. At fifteen I learned sword exercise, at sixteen to repeat the Ballads and the Book of History. I am now twenty-two, over 9 feet high, with eyes like swinging pearls and teeth like a row of shells. I am as brave, as energetic, as pure, as loyal as the heroes of old, therefore consider myself fit to be a high official."

Tung-fang So was at once employed by the Emperor and by his wit and eloquence exercised a good influence over him, as when he advised him against incorporating acres of productive farm and mining lands into the imperial hunting grounds.

Another still more remarkable man, brought to the front as the result of Wu Ti's proclamation, was the versatile Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju, poet, scholar, statesman, general, diplomat, whose skill brought about in 130 the bloodless annexation of several principalities, West of the Min River in modern Szechuan, till then not only independent but generally actively hostile.

Then there was Tang Mêng, sent to explore the course of the Si Kiang (West River), down which sailed the flotillas of junks which brought Canton most of its supplies. Among them the preserves made of a delicious sweet fruit, the *hovenia dulcis*, which he later discovered grew in the warm valleys of Kuei Chou between the sources of the West River and the upper reaches of the Yangtze-kiang. From this he surmised the existence of a south-western route to Canton directer than the south-eastern one hitherto used.

Similarly, Chang Ch'ien, the most famous of Wu Ti's excep-

tionally gifted "envoys to distant states," concluded from the presence of the bamboo articles and linen of Szechuan in the bazaars of Bactria (Ta Hsia) brought there from India (Shen-tu) that a way could be found across the Upper Yangtze direct into India, thence to Ferghana and its magnificent horses, avoiding the northern route always beset and frequently blocked by hostile Hiung nu. Wu Ti enthusiastically took up the idea and sent as many as four expeditions South to discover that road. Between the physical difficulties and the enmity of the natives they all came to grief, but did obtain definite knowledge of the trail linking up Yunnan with northern Burmah. It was in the West that, thanks to Chang Ch'ien, both the knowledge and conquest of hitherto almost undreamt-of regions were made possible, and that boundaries and distances were shifted back hundreds of miles.

Brooding over his plans of revenge against the Hiung nu, Wu Ti remembered their old enemies the Yüeh chi, whom they had driven West, killing their King. His skull mounted in gold still served them as a drinking cup. The Yüeh chi would surely therefore feel as anxious for revenge as he did himself and welcome an alliance, promising to thoroughly punish their common enemy, attacking him from two sides at once. The plan seemed excellent. Its only weak point was that no one knew precisely whither the Yüeh chi had trekked. Chang Ch'ien undertook to find out.

In 138 with 100 men he set forth, but had not left the protection of the Great Wall behind him long ere he was captured by the Hiung nu and detained for ten years. Nothing daunted, when he at last escaped, he continued his journey West in search of the Yüeh chi. After much travelling among unknown but friendly tribes, he found them comfortably settled in the Ta Hsia, the lands watered by the Jaxartes and Oxus, from which they had driven their former Græco-Bactrian owners. They treated him well, though they refused to be drawn into any military alliance. But he brought back the walnut and the grape and above all a store of accurate information about the political and economic conditions of that immense region West of the Yü Men, the Gate of Jade, till then only known as one of the eight distances beyond one of the eight wilds.

On the strength of this information Wu Ti was able to plan and by a skilful mixture of force and suasion to gradually carry out the establishment of Han domination over the thirty-six principalities strung along the northern and southern boundaries of the Tarim Basin and reaching into Ferghana through the passes of the Tien Shan.



In 115 Chang Ch'ien was sent West again to the Ili region with 300 men, 600 horses and quantities of costly silks and other choice presents on an embassy to the Wu-sun to cajole them into an alliance against the hateful Hiung nus. The Wu-suns are described as "blue eyed, red haired, with a marked likeness to apes of whom they are descended." In their mode of life they resembled the Hiung nu. They had befriended Chang Ch'ien on his first journey, but having once been conquered by the Hiung nu and won their freedom back only recently, they were as little inclined as the Yüeh chi to start fighting them again. Even their friendly neutrality had to be purchased by the gift of a Han princess.

Married to the aged Khan whom she only saw once a year, without a thought or a word in common, she wrote a tender lyric voicing her home-sickness and that of all those dainty little princesses banished from the luxurious palaces of Ch'anggan to the hardships of the felt tents and coarse meat fare of illiterate barbarians just because the politics of grown men then as everywhere and always never hesitated to fling the life and happiness of youth into the grinding maelstrom of their own ambitious schemes.

But greatness cannot be achieved for nothing and in the case of the northern frontiers, barest security demanded constant sacrifice of beautiful young lives and of much shining gold. For the courageous and the ambitious there were, however, splendid compensations, immortal fame bestowed by the people, rich gifts in land and honours conferred by the Emperor who even created a new title, "Meritorious and brilliant in imperial favour," as no old one could bear the full weight of his admiration for those who made his name a terror to the hated foe. Lavish with the rewards he heaped upon success, he demanded that it should be continuous. One failure and generals who had been in command of entire army corps, in enjoyment of untold favour, wealth and influence, were hurled into an abyss of obloquy from which only a few escaped alive.

For Wu Ti could be terrible. To serve him was like living on the slopes of a volcano, for years serene abundance of all the heart desires, then one sudden day lava torrents and poison fumes exterminating everything.

Thus the famous historian Ssü-ma Ch'ien, like his father Ssü-ma Tan before him, Grand Astrologer (T'ai che Kung), was condemned to be emasculated simply because he alone of all Wu Ti's courtiers had the courage to stand up for Li Ling, an officer, who after prodigies of valour against overwhelming odds had surrendered to the Hiung nu.

Nothing but the desire to complete the great historical work begun by his father prevented Ssü-ma Ch'ien from escaping this disgrace by suicide. The Emperor, alive to his exceptional talents, soon restored him to favour and eventually raised him to the rank of the Minister of State in charge of imperial edicts and memorials (Ching Shu ling).

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether Ssü-ma Ch'ien ever quite forgave the Emperor. An undercurrent of scorn and resentment, though guardedly worded, runs through everything he writes about Wu Ti.

With less reserve Li Ling, in a letter he wrote to his friend Su Wu, at one time his fellow captive in the northern wilds, indignantly exclaims :

" My merit was great, my guilt of small account.

" The stain of my prince's ingratitude can never be wiped out.

" Why were my own flesh and blood condemned to death ?

" I think of my aged mother butchered on the threshold of the grave, of my innocent wife and child condemned to the same cruel fate, and raising my face to Heaven I beat my breast and shed tears of blood."

He decided to turn his back on the ungrateful Hans for ever and to take service with the northern Son of Heaven who certainly did his best to dry the exile's tears, " giving him his own daughter to wife and the command of the right wing of his army." Wherefore though his new country was " stiff with black ice " he lived there over fully twenty years and only died in 74.

His grandfather Li Kuang also complained about imperial injustice. At one time Wu Ti's best officer, the idol of his soldiers and the terror of the Hiung nu, who called him the Flying General because he was even swifter than they in his attacks, he was over sixty years old, too old it was thought for active fighting, when the memorable campaign of 119 right across the Gobi Desert was launched against the Jenuye Ichizia. A younger generation of generals had come to the front, Wei Ch'ing, the commander-in-chief, and his nephew Ho Ch'ü-ping, head of the Light Cavalry. Li Kuang, trembling for his laurels, pleaded hard to be sent out too. Reluctantly the Emperor appointed him commander of the vanguard, but in private warned Wei Ch'ing to keep him away from the front line. In the general advance, therefore, Wei Ch'ing took the short western and ordered Li Kuang to march on the more devious eastern route. Deeply hurt at what he considered an affront, Li Kuang neglected proper precautions, lost the way, and never picked up the main army again till the battle had been fought and won.





SU WU

TENDING SHEEP AS A CAPTIVE TO THE HIUNG NU, FAMOUS HAN GENERAL





The Commander-in-chief sent him a present of rice and wine to sugar the bitter pill of the inquiry which would have to be made into the cause of the delay. But the old warrior only saw the pill and found it too hard to swallow. Standing in his tent he spoke to the men assembled under the signal flag :

“ Since I bound up my hair I have fought the Hiung nu in seventy bigger and smaller battles and when at last I was vouchsafed the happiness of fighting the Jenuye himself, the Commander-in-chief relegated my division to a circuitous route. In addition I lost my way. Surely this was ordained by Heaven. I am too old to defend myself before the pen and sword of law courts.”

And he cut his throat. All his officers and the whole army wept and so did the people when they heard of it.

A worse fate befell his namesake Li Kuang-li. Come into prominence as the brother of the Emperor's favourite the beautiful Li Fu jen, he made good his first failure in the punitive expedition launched in 103 against Ferghana by a decisive victory achieved in 101. In 99 and 97 he was sent to complete China's newly acquired hold over Central Asia by attacking the Hiung nu on their western flank and was again victorious. Nevertheless, the incorrigible Hiung nu started raiding again six years later, necessitating yet another expedition. In the midst of it Li Kuang Li heard that his wife and family had been entangled in the frightful witchcraft trials which were just then raging in the capital. This clearly meant his own execution the moment he returned. He therefore surrendered to the barbarians he had beaten so often. For this many of them bore him bitter hatred, which envy at the favour shown him by the Jenuye Hulughu only inflamed the more. They took the opportunity of the chief Queen falling sick to make a sorceress declare the illness had been sent by the late Jenuye, angry at not having yet been given the blood of his enemy Li Kuang-li promised him long ago.

Whereupon Li Kuang-li was seized, slain and offered the Ancestors in sacrifice. Before his death he uttered terrible imprecations, crying : “ I die but I shall destroy you.”

And behold for months it snowed unceasingly, the cattle died, the tribe fell sick, the grain rotted. Then the Jenuye in great fear built a house of sacrifice to appease the spirit of Li Kuang-li.

Su Wu's experience among the barbarians, though with a happier ending, was otherwise even harder. He was sent on an embassy to the new Jenuye Zütegen to bring him rich gifts of brocade in recognition of his having set some Han prisoners free and agreed to acknowledge Wu Ti as his father-in-law,

Zütegen, with the perfidy not uncommon in diplomatic relations, detained Su Wu and tried to lure him into his service. Rather than be guilty of disloyalty Su Wu attempted to commit suicide. A Hiung nu medicine man cured his wound by the peculiar method of digging a hole in the ground into which he put a glimmering fire. Over this he placed the patient and massaged his back with his feet "to drive out the blood."

Strange to say, at the end of half a day of this treatment, Su Wu, who already had ceased to breathe, began to recover. Zütegen, touched by his constancy, became all the keener to win him over to his side. Failing again, he got angry and flung him into a dark grain pit without either food or drink. But Heaven sent Su Wu snow for his thirst and he ate the hairs of his fur-coat. After several days he was still alive. Then the Hiung nu looked on him as uncanny and banished him to the desolate wilds of the North Sea (Lake Baikal). There he tended their sheep and there when in 86 he got the news of Wu Ti's death he turned his face South towards far-away Ch'ang-an and wept and wailed aloud. He may have found some comfort in the stern grandeur of the scenery and in his gift for poetry.

At last, in 81, after nineteen years, he was released and rewarded for his loyalty by being made Chancellor of the Tributary States. He died an octogenarian in the year 60. Several others of Wu Ti's ambassadors to the Hiung nu were thus detained and unless willing to renounce their allegiance treated like slaves. Many of his generals were executed for lack of success, while numbers of his wardens of the marches, on that immense frontier not always provided with a sufficiency of men or munitions, were massacred by the raiders. For a long while, too, year in year out, with tragic monotony the entry is repeated:

"The Hiung nu broke in, slew the officials, butchered or dragged off into captivity many thousands of the people." This is the dark side of that great epic, the century-long struggle between the Hans and the Hiung nu. There was a bright side, too, a brilliant one even, flashing with all the high lights of indomitable endurance, magnificent strategy, amazing exploits, dazzling careers.

Ho Ch'ü-ping, the ever-victorious cavalry leader who pursued the enemy across the vastness of the flowing sands, is the embodiment of all that is splendid and stirring in that gigantic contest with its "Generals of Tiger Teeth" and "Field Marshals of Hawk Attacks." It is therefore fitting that his Tomb in the valley of the Wei has been preserved and is still guarded by a huge heavy-limbed stone horse holding a Hiung



nu down between its hoofs. He was the nephew of Wei Ch'ing who, like Li Kuang-li, owed his promotion to the fact that his sister got into the Emperor's seraglio. She was merely a singing girl, her brother only a groom, but they both had their wits about them and the Emperor cared more about these than about pedigrees. Besides "her hair was glossy and her teeth gleamed like pearls." When in 128 she bore him a son, he made her Empress. Her brother had already in 124 been created Commander-in-chief and in reward of a great victory over the Hiung nu, lord of a manor of 6,000 families. The following year her nephew, Ho Ch'ü-ping, a son of her sister's, though only eighteen, had distinguished himself so much as a dashing cavalry officer, bringing back 2,028 Hiung nu heads and prisoners, that he was endowed with a manor of 1,600 families, and two years later (121) given an independent command in a fresh expedition against the Hiung nu.

This time he brought back 8,960 heads and prisoners, also a "golden image used by a chieftain when worshipping Heaven." It was about 10 feet high and Wu Ti, honouring what others had held sacred, placed it in the Hall of the Sweet Springs and let incense be burnt before it. According to later comments it was an image of Buddha. For this victory which resulted in the annexation of the whole of what is now western Kansuh and the surrender of 100,000 Hiung nu, Ho Ch'ü-ping's estate was increased by 1,700 families.

In 119 it received a further addition of 5,800 and the young general was honoured as highly as his uncle Wei Ch'ing with the title of Great Field Marshal. He richly deserved it, for, as the Emperor declared,

"He led his army himself. It only carried light baggage, marched through the Great Desert and fought a fierce battle, capturing prisoners, banners and drums. He crossed rivers and mountains and took a commander-in-chief, a prime minister, three Kings and eighty-three nobles prisoner. . . . Altogether those taken number 70,443, yet of his own forces he only lost three-tenths. He seized the enemy's food stores; so he penetrated far and never ran out of provisions."

Ho Ch'ü-ping's and Wei Ch'ing's armies had sallied forth with 140,000 horses, barely 30,000 came back. The bones of the others marked the long trail across the Gobi and the battle-fields along the hills and rivers in the neighbourhood of modern Urga. The Jenuye Ichizia, attacked in his furthest stronghold, after fighting desperately all day saw himself surrounded on every side. Then he mounted a chariot drawn by six mules and with his bodyguard of picked riders broke through and away in swift north-westerly flight under cover of the dusk and a terrific

sandstorm. Though keenly pursued he escaped, but his power was lamed for years and Ho Ch'ü-ping brought a solemn sacrifice on the summit of one of those far mountains, to thank Heaven for such a signal wiping out of the humiliation of P'ing Ch'êng.

Wu Ti, who had desired this so ardently and long, could not do enough for the brilliant young commander, yet as early as 117 he died, not twenty-five years old, which perhaps should be accounted part of his extraordinary good luck. It spared him the bitter taste of failing powers, dwindling favour and the successful envy that always lies in wait for the astonishingly great.

His brother, Ho Kuang, stood so high in Wu Ti's confidence he appointed him regent to the young son he chose as his successor shortly before his death. Ho Ch'ü-ping's uncle, Wei Ch'ing, died in 106 without fighting the Hiung nu again for "the horses of the Han had been too greatly reduced in numbers and there were wars against the two Yueh Kingdoms and against Chao Hsien" (Korea). Also Wu Ti's bold policy of attack had proved the best defensive, Mêng Tien's lost conquests were reconquered and many parts of the frontier completely cleared of the Hiung nu, driven away north-west right across the desert. For twenty years their territory was invaded and harried so often "they were exhausted and disheartened, their children born unripe or dead, their raids decreasing almost to vanishing point." When they did risk one and came hunting, shooting and plundering along the Great Wall the signal fires leapt up swiftly, the patrols were on the alert and sent them home with broken heads and empty hands. Which was not encouraging.

Therefore, in 78 they turned their pugnaciousness to a less dangerous enemy, the Tungusic tribe of the Wu Huans camping along the upper reaches of the Liao River. But the Han forces interfering and smashing up the Wu Huans on their own account, they drew off again, definitely abandoned the East and looked for compensations in the West, which with its long trails of rich caravanserais in any case promised more tempting booty.

They seized Kuche and Aksu, two important cities on the trade route through the Tarim Basin and exhilarated by this success, fell on the Wu-suns, clamouring for their Han Princess. Thereupon both she and the Khan sent piteous appeals to the Court of Ch'ang-an:

"The Hiung nu are constantly attacking the country of the Wu-sun territory and tearing pieces from it. . . . O Son of Heaven, send your army and save the Princess and the Khan!"



This recrudescence of Hiung nu power in Central Asia imperilling all Wu Ti's conquests there, the Emperor in 71 ordered five generals in command of over 10,000 troopers each to sally forth from the border forts. The Wu-suns contributing another 50,000, the forces mobilized amounted to 200,000, but at the first news of their approach the Hiung nu drove off their flocks and fled so far North that the Chinese found little to capture.

Shang Hui, the general who, having inside knowledge of the barbarians, was given the special task of co-operating with the Wu-suns, came to close quarters with the enemy, captured the Jenuye Khuyente's uncle, sister-in-law, married daughter and various chieftains with all their followers, a total of 39,000 persons and, what the Jenuye probably felt far more, 700,000 horses, cattle, sheep, donkeys and camels. The Wu-suns kept most of these, which may have been the reason for the Hiung nu attacking them again the moment the Han armies, having cleared the northern frontiers and the road West, were withdrawn. The Jenuye led the raid himself, but when he turned homewards "Heaven sent down so much snow, in one day it covered the ground ten feet deep. Men and animals froze to death. Only one-tenth ever saw their home tents again."

Other disasters followed. With "thousands killed, wounded or trekked away into far wilds and lost there, the Hiung nu were too enfeebled to keep tribes formerly subjugated, in awe. From North, East, West these now fell on them slaying further tens of thousands, men, horses, oxen, sheep." When they left, a famine came, killing three-tenths of the remaining population and half their live stock. The ruin seemed complete, the proud work of Mo-tun dropping back into the flowing sands whence it had arisen.

The position was so thoroughly reversed, the Hans now made the raids which the nomads were unable to avenge. As is the way of hungry men they started snarling at each other, and in the turmoil of a disputed succession had as many as five Khans at once, one of whom happening to be Li Ling's half-cast son.

Finally, there ensued a split into an eastern and a western group under two brothers, Hu lan hsieh, also known as Khu-ganja, and Tsit Ki. The latter having the sharper teeth of the two, bit his brother so hard he ran whining for protection to the southern and now obviously only Son of Heaven.

At Ch'ang-an there was considerable doubt as to whether instead of giving such protection to barbarians, known for their treachery, their enfeebled state should not be used for dealing

them a smashing blow. But one minister, Hsiao Wang chi, who did not believe in eliminating the ideal of the Chün tze, the man of righteousness and honour, from foreign affairs, memorialized against such a course :

" If we attack the Hiung nu now, trying to forge our advantage out of his misfortunes, he is sure to take to flight, and the unjust campaign will bring us great exertions and small results. Instead, we should succour him in his distress. The barbarians of the four quarters hearing this, will be seized with such admiration for our clemency and justice, they will vie with each other to come under the protectorate of the Middle Kingdom. . . . Such a success would be the consummation of imperial beneficence."

This far-sighted policy was adopted and Khuganja taken under Chinese protection. The young brother and the son whom he sent to serve as hostages and pages at the Court of Ch'ang-an were well received and the ceremonial proper for this unique occasion, the voluntary submission of the once invincible Hiung nu, discussed and settled.

" In the first moon (51) the Jenuye was received in audience by the Son of Heaven in the Palace of the Sweet Springs (Kan ch'uan). He was accorded a place above that of the tributary Kings, the heralds announced him as ' subject ' without calling out his name," an omission which according to etiquette was a great honour. " The Emperor gave him a robe with cap and belt, a golden seal, a jade-hilted sword, jade trinkets, a bow with four quivers full of arrows, ten parade lances, a commodious carriage, saddlery, fifteen horses, twenty pounds of gold, 200,000 cash, seventy-seven coats, 8,000 rolls of gold brocade and of thin silk, embroidered and woven with flowers, several kinds of cloth and 6,000 pounds of unspun silk. . . ."

When next day Hsüan Ti returned to Ch'ang-an the chieftains of the Hiung nu and other barbarians, together with the Kings and grandees of Han, thousands of them, met the imperial procession on the further banks of the Wei and stood up and formed a guard of honour. As soon as the Emperor reached the bridge they shouted with one voice : " Wan sui ! " (Ten thousand years of life !)

After being entertained in the capital a whole month, Khuganja was escorted back by a large force of cavalry, who remained beyond the border to assist him in restoring order among his rebellious subjects. Supplies of grain, rice, cooked and dried, were also lavished upon him.

In 49 he repeated his visit and received an even greater quantity of presents. The Han protectorate was decidedly worth having. Therefore Tsit Ki, the pugnacious brother, also



sent a son and an ambassador to Ch'ang-an. But in the end love of fighting prevailed over love of security. Moving West he carved a big Kingdom out for himself for which Uighur, Kirghiz and Wu-suns had to supply the material. The latter were the greatest sufferers. "He penetrated far into their territory, slaying or enslaving the people, stealing the cattle. . . . For miles inland there was not one inhabitant left."

Then Tsit Ki waxed conceited, exacted tribute from Ferg-hana, demanded the return of his son from Ch'ang-an and this being conceded murdered the imperial ambassador who escorted the boy home. After which exploit, anxious to increase the distance between himself and retribution, he moved still further West. Yet it overtook him after all.

In 36 Kan Yen Shou and Ch'en Tang, one of those energetic resourceful wide-visioned organizers who made the Han policy of expansion such a brilliant success, were in command of the Western garrisons. Ch'en Tang, realizing the importance of punishing the murderer of a Han ambassador and of checking his career of conquest before it had swelled into unmanageable proportions, suggested launching a punitive expedition against Tsit Ki. He overcame the objections of his more cautious superior, Kan Yen Shou, and in alliance with the Wu-suns, their forces, imperial and colonial, comprising regiments "for the spreading of reverence" of "the White Tiger and of the united troopers" surprised Tsit Ki in his capital on the Talas River (in modern Turkestan).

Against the Hiung nu custom, whose strength lay in their elusive mobility, he had sought security by making it a fortified city, keeping 500 men at work on its walls for two whole years. Which proved his undoing. It did not take the Han generals, experienced in siege warfare, two days to catch him within his own ramparts like a mouse in a trap. He put up a show of resistance, "donned his cuirass and from the top of a tower with his chief consort and a few dozen of his lesser wives took pot-shots at the besiegers. But an arrow hit him in the nose, most of the ladies fell, so he galloped off to the women's quarters in his palace." During the night his forces attempted several sallies against the Han camp, but were invariably repulsed.

At dawn signal fires flamed up from each of its four sides and with loud hurrahs the Han officers and men dashed forward to the attack, the noise of their cymbals and drums shaking the ground, Tsit Ki's troops crumpling up before them. The shield-bearers in the van, "from all sides at once they rushed at the earth walls like one man, scaled them and seized the city. The harem in which Tsit Ki with 100 persons of both

sexes lay in hiding, was set on fire, his head cut off, also that of the chief consort." Altogether 1,518 heads fell that day, only 145 Hiung nu were taken alive, 1,000 surrendered.

As Kan Ye Shou and Chen Tang suggested in their report to the Emperor, these heads were hung up "in the Kao Street at Ch'ang-an round the quarters reserved for the barbarians, a clear warning for thousands of miles that none offending the mighty Han escaped condign punishment at whatever distance they might seek to hide."

The successful commanders were rewarded with promotion and an estate of 350 families each, besides 100 pounds of gold, no more than they deserved, for the campaign with its long march through the passes of the Tien Shan had been so arduous, Chen Tang contracted a rheumatic stiffness of the joints which permanently crippled his arms. The people were gladdened with a general amnesty and the spirits of the ancestors with the news of this great victory crowning the work they had begun.

After the drastic crushing of the Western Hiung nu brother, the eastern one, Khuganja, increased in affability and offered to take over permanently and entirely the defence of China's northern frontier. Like all big political aggregations the Han Empire had to supplement its military man-power from outside sources. But to depend on these most would sooner or later spell disaster.

The Hiung nu's offer was therefore politely but firmly declined and the Chinese garrisons along the Great Wall maintained, though at the reduced strength rendered possible by the new reign of friendliness and peace.

In 33 Khuganja came to visit the Emperor a third time. The seventy-seven coats and the 8,000 rolls of gold brocade evidently had an irresistible fascination for him, not to mention all the other attractions Ch'ang-an had to offer. He now asked for a Han princess so as to be able to call himself the Emperor's son-in-law, and the daughter of an imperial concubine Wang Chao Chün was accordingly given him. The story of her having been the loveliest Palace beauty, of whose existence the Emperor was unaware till after he had promised her to the barbarian, and his then vainly offering fabulous treasures to buy her back belongs to the legends poets weave about those whose fate haunts them like an unforgettable dream. As a matter of fact, she married Khuganja and was called the consort who brings the Hiung nu peace. At his death in 31, following her new country's custom, she became the wife of his son and successor Vughturoi and had two daughters by him,



one of whom the princess Un, as a relation of Wang Mang, was later on to play a rôle at his Court.

This evil creature not only usurped the Empire of the Hans but almost destroyed it. Like all fanatics of change and innovation for their own sake, he undid in a few months what his predecessors had built up by years of patient labour. Nowhere did his ignorant folly produce more disastrous results than in what was precisely the greatest achievement of the Hans, their foreign policy. Initiated by the genius of Wu Ti and carried out by distinguished and devoted public servants, encouraged by the imperial patronage of K'ung Tzū's principles, it needed for its successful continuance the tact, the loyalty, the instinctive appreciation of a great tradition, the very qualities for which usurpers lack all understanding, which indeed they are the first to undermine. Now Wang Mang was an usurper of the worst type, for the new order he introduced was considerably worse than the one he replaced. Neither the Hiung nu tamed by the Hans nor the colonial generals and governors trained to maintain the prestige of the Hans on distant frontiers could possibly feel any loyalty towards the destroyer of the dynasty they still revered. That fact alone was enough to tear great rents into the whole fabric of the military and civil services. Two officers of the western garrisons mutinied. They were finally caught and burned alive, but the spirit of mutiny had meanwhile spread to the barbarians.

In his preposterous conceit Wang Mang claimed a mandate from Heaven entitling him to change the protectorate which was all even the greatest Hans had claimed to possess over the barbarians, into definite dominion. Accordingly he created "Generals exercising authority in the five regions of space," fitted them out with symbolically colourful splendour and dispatched them to all the vassal kings and chieftains to exchange the seals bestowed on them by the Han for new ones bestowed by him, these being the kind used for subordinates, not for semi-sovereign rulers. The first result of this folly was consternation, the second fury, the third revolt, a complete breakdown of the friendly relations the Hans had taken such pains to establish, and a terrible renewal of Hiung nu raids.

"Since Hsüan Ti (73-49 B.C.) several generations in the northern border districts had not seen the alarm fires burn. The population had increased rapidly, the pasture grounds were full of horses and cattle. Then Wang Mang upset everything and started the Hiung nu on the war-path again. The inhabitants were killed or captured or frightened away."

The twelve army corps he scraped together to drive the in-

vaders out only made matters worse. They had been recruited with considerable difficulty, prisoners, exiles and brigands being freely enlisted. Their equipment and transportation caused commotion and discontent throughout the country. Quartered for months in the marches waiting for the general advance which for lack of means never took place at all, discipline and cohesion among officers and men went to pieces.

"In a few years the process of depopulation was complete, the northern borderlands reduced to a wilderness of unburied bones. . . ."

The radius of China's prestige, from having extended thousands of miles beyond her frontiers, shrivelled away even from these.

When in 24 the Liu prince who first, though only transiently, restored the Han dynasty, sent a new seal exactly like the old Han seal to the Hiung nu Jenuye Khutulz, the latter "behaved with great arrogance," saying: "When Han fell into disorder it was defeated by Wang Mang. But the Hiung nu fought Wang Mang, ravaged his frontiers and caused the whole country to demand the Hans back. They therefore owe the throne to me and should honour me as their superior."

From this attitude no argument the Chinese put forward could induce him to move, which is not surprising since the only unanswerable one, superior physical force, was entirely on his side till his death in 46.

Then, however, a great change took place. A second Wu Ti sat on the Dragon Throne and the Hiung nu, quarrelling among themselves over the succession, split up into a northern and a southern branch.

The head of the latter renewed his ancestor Khuganja's policy of submission to the Middle Kingdom, not because he wanted to, but because, enfeebled by a three years' drought that killed off his men and beasts wholesale, he found himself helplessly caught between the enmity of the northern Jenuye and the bristling bastions of the Great Wall, again manned by Han soldiers, reinforced by an early edition of tanks, namely turrets mounted on carts and pulled by oxen from one threatened spot to another. Rich presents of silks and of savoury dainties softened the bitterness of the humiliation inflicted on him by the imperial envoy who compelled him to prostrate himself before the mandate graciously extending the Son of Heaven's protection to him.

The northern Hiung nu, reduced by this mass defection of their fellow tribesmen, were preyed on by the Tungusic Wu Huans and Sien pis whom the Chinese governors of the border



districts encouraged in head-hunting raids, paying a fixed sum for each Hiung nu head brought in. This apparently proving insufficient to stop their intrigues in the West, a great expedition was launched against them in A.D. 89. Tou Hsien, who was in command, attacked and defeated them as far north as the heights round the sources of the Orkhon, Tula and Kerulen Rivers.

"The Jenuye fled. His troops were pursued and slain, 3,000 nobles beheaded, 100,000 horses, camels, sheep captured, eighty-one clans forced to submit. Then Tou Hsien went up a mountain a thousand miles away from the fortified Wall and on a high rock at the water's edge (Chi lo Shan) engraved a written record of the might and blessings of the great Hans :

"The march went uphill and downhill over rocky and salt ground across the boundless desert. We beheaded the Unghu nobles and smeared their blood on the drums. We took the blood of the Dzitok grandees and spread it on our swords. Advancing in four columns in a radius of 10,000 miles we swept the land like comets and cleared the steppes of foes. Maps gave us accurate knowledge of mountains and streams. . . . Mo-tun's territory was laid waste. Kayuk's residence burnt to the ground. Thus upwards atonement was offered for the unavenged feud of the Ancestors Kao and Wên Ti, light brought their souls in the murky Beyond ; downwards peace and repose secured their descendants, their dominion enlarged, the great Han dynasty's thunderous voice made to resound. Then we sacrificed to the Mountain and engraved this stone. . . . Thus far our well-trained warriors penetrated fighting barbarians. We punished their insolence, restored our rule in this distant land. Across vast plains they fled to their northern lair, while our valiant troops set up this trophy that 10,000 generations hence our most glorious Lord's triumph still shall be known."

The northern Hiung nu shortly afterwards dropping out of Chinese history, this inscription is practically their epitaph. It was written by Pan Ku, the famous court annalist, who took up the task begun by his father Pan Piao of bringing Szū-ma Ch'ien's history down to their own time. The work was completed by his sister Pan Chao after his death in prison for alleged complicity with his friend Tou Hsien's no doubt just as fictitious treasonable designs.

His equally famous but more fortunate brother Pan Ch'ao as governor of the Western regions with full military powers, revived Wu Ti's colonial policy for thirty-one years with amazing energy and success. The problem of the hegemony over the principalities of the Tarim Basin and Ferghana was intimately connected with the struggle between Hiung nus and Hans.

On that ground their pretensions clashed in fiercest rivalry

partly on account of the revenue accruing from its trade, mainly on account of the horses of Ta Yuan (Ferghana), reputed the swiftest and most enduring in the world and capable of running till they sweated blood. In that age of cavalry warfare a supply of good horses was as vital and consequently as frequent a cause of sanguinary conflicts as that of oil is to-day. Wu Ti devoted much attention to it and besides successfully stimulating horse-breeding among his own subjects, undertook several military expeditions with no other object in view than the securing of the superb horses of Ferghana. Without them Li Kuang's and Ho Ch'ü-ping's lightning attacks on the Hiung nu could never have been carried out.

As under the early, so likewise under the later Hans, the long line of garrisons and semi-military colonies which arose as a consequence of Wu Ti's campaigns to keep the power of China a live presence in the Far West, proved a main factor in breaking the power of the Hiung nu. But only the power. The race survived. It disintegrated, it did not die out, and when the southern Hiung nu, who survived the northern ones by a century, disappeared as a political unit, other "emanations of the steppe" arose just as "wolf-hearted" as they had been, and clearly the identical breed, though bearing new names. Indeed, in the prolonged confusion following the second collapse of the Han dynasty, descendants of a Hiung nu Jenuye and a Han princess sat on the Dragon Throne in Lo yang and Ch'ang-an for over ten years (308-319).

That was in the days of weariness, downfall, contraction. Those of Wu Ti were days of vigour, ascent and expansion which flowed over every frontier, carrying with it the establishment of Han leadership into all neighbouring states. Thus by 111 in the South the Yüe Kingdoms had all been annexed and brought under direct control, and Canton, after a brief but bitter siege, became an imperial harbour. In 108 Chao Hsien, the northern portion of Korea, was conquered and broken up into four Chinese prefectures. The object of this conquest was to cut the Hiung nu off from their eastern hunting grounds.

Similarly, in the West, to stop their frequent attempts at coalitions with the Kiangs or the Tibetans of the upper Huang Ho, a lasso was thrown over these, and they were kept dancing to the tune of a Chinese resident. They broke it in 61, hungry, but Chao Chung-Kuo, the general sent against them, though seventy years old, attacked them with such speed and skill the campaign was over in a few months and he could report that of the 50,000 insurgent tribesmen only a remnant of 4,000 had not been either killed or drowned or starved to death. It was not





PAN CHAO (1ST CENTURY)

SISTER OF PAN KU, WHOSE HISTORY SHE COMPLETED





difficult to readjust the lasso round the necks of this handful of survivors.

Nevertheless, eighteen years later, having coalesced with some other clans, they broke it again and to the number of 30,000 invaded the Wei valley. Fortunately the Empire, though caught napping there, still had its "claws and fangs," its victorious generals, in reserve, who made the Kiangs depart more quickly than they had come, leaving thousands of corpses behind them. Within a few weeks the "all clear" could again be sounded along the whole frontier, and Wu Ti's spirit be informed that the heritage he had acquired for his descendants had not been lost.

Naturally the cost of his conquests was heavy. Expansion by force of arms, though ultimately producing a vast increase of wealth through the strengthening of the nation's security and the widening of the scope of its commerce and power of levying tribute, does mean a heavy burden of service and taxes, often at least temporarily greatly impoverishing the people. At his accession, thanks to his predecessors' economy, there was no poverty:

"Everybody had enough for his family. Stores overflowed with goods. Cash reserves in the capital ran into millions. The cords on which the coins were strung rotted away and counting became impossible. All the granaries inside and outside the capital were so full the grain spilt over in heaps on to the ground outside, where it perished. There were horses in the humblest quarters, herds of them in the country lanes. The village watchmen ate meat and good wheat and offices were transmitted from father to son. . . . There was free trade within the four Seas. Rich merchants and wholesale dealers could move about everywhere and all commodities be obtained without difficulty. Every one was contented and law abiding."

But then conceit supervened, arrogance, luxury, "imperial princes, nobles and high officials outdid each other in the ostentatious prodigality of their mansions, carriages and robes."

And Wu Ti started his policy of imperial expansion with all it involved of armaments, wars, the constructing of forts, walls, strategic roads, commercial canals, the founding of colonies, the feeding of newly incorporated tribes, the recruiting and rewarding of soldiers. The Korean campaign threw such burdens on the adjoining provinces the people's patience reached breaking-point. Riots occurred. But Wu Ti, like all constructive leaders, was too sure of the value of his far-reaching schemes not to be prepared to carry them through in the teeth of opposition, difficulties, even of temporary failure.

Thus he persisted in the building of the road destined to open up the unexplored South-west, though, as Ssü-ma Ch'ien

bitterly remarks, it completely exhausted the people of Sze Chuan, required thousands of workmen to build it, hundreds of carriers to bring the food to the workmen and for years proved utterly useless.

Similarly, some of the canals intended to facilitate the transport of goods to the capital and to portions of the Great Wall never seemed to near completion in spite of enormous quantities of labour and money lavished on them.

In 132 the Yellow River burst its dikes. The immediate loss this caused and the expense of the repairs, only terminated in 109, ran into millions. Adding to these immense outlays on wars, imperial inspection tours and pilgrimages, no wonder public and private savings fell to zero, the masses were oppressed, the soldiers unpaid, Wu Ti's resources lagging more and more behind his needs.

He did make some show of restricting the latter by drastic cuts in his personal expenditure, especially in the Palace kitchens and stables. One of his councillors, Kung Hsuan lung, also set a good example of simplicity by dressing in plain linen and limiting his meals to one dish. But such small economies made no appreciable difference, while the real cause of the deficit, the needs of the policy of expansion, not only were not reduced but steadily increased. As nothing would induce Wu Ti to give these up, there was nothing left for his finance minister to do but to strain every nerve to increase his resources.

He called to his aid three adepts at the art of growing rich, a certain Hsien Yang, who had made his fortune in salt ; a K'ung Kin, who had made his in iron ; and San Hun Yang, a shop-keeper's son, who could solve in his head the intricate arithmetical problems needed to produce the desired multiplication of means. These three, putting their razor-sharp wits together, did manage to fill the Imperial Exchequer. Needless to say that, thinking only in terms of material values, the methods they employed were often a flagrant violation of the spiritual values represented by the Chün tze.

Under their régime the sale of titles, from having been used sparingly and regretfully as a last resource, became a regular business with a fixed tariff. A special order of military merit was instituted, military only in the sense of providing funds for the army. It comprised eleven degrees, the first marked 170,000, the succeeding ones 20,000 cash each. Altogether it cost thirty-seven pounds of pure gold to acquire the top degree, no doubt at that time a high but not prohibitive price to pay for the gratification of one's snobbishness. The worst feature of this order was that it carried with it a claim to official posts.



Though some of these were so hard to fill, men nominated to them were not allowed to decline unless they paid a heavy fine in horses ; others brought in so many opportunities for gain that they attracted the undesirable element of profiteers and climbers.

Ssü-ma Ch'ien also brands another financial expedient, the grant of official promotion in exchange of gifts in kind or money :

“ From that time the presentation of sheep gave a man official rank. The principles of selection and recommendation were corrupted, honour and disinterestedness defiled.”

That the condemned were allowed to purchase either redemption or reduction of penalties legally incurred may have led to some badly needed mitigation in the harshness of punishments, but also had the less desirable effect of differentiating between the rich and the poor and of tempting magistrates to look on prisoners as a source of revenue, thus giving them a direct interest in multiplying their numbers.

This sheds a sinister light on the mass prosecutions which took place under cover of sorcery trials at the close of Wu Ti's reign.

A third less questionable and more productive device for enriching the Exchequer was the establishment of state monopolies in salt, iron and alcohol. Like most innovations it was enforced with great severity, also like most monopolies it made prices higher and goods poorer than they had been under the old system of private competitive production. However, the substantial addition it brought the powers of the Central Government was an advantage that far outweighed individual losses and hardships.

The same cannot be said of a fourth source of revenue discovered by Wu Ti's financial miracle-mongers, the profits of merchants and manufacturers, which were taxed so heavily they disappeared. The merchants were hit hardest, many ruined, which may have been the aim of the Government, for it at once itself took up the business of wholesale buying and selling of prime necessities, ostensibly to prevent speculation and sudden fluctuations in prices. Therefore the officials in charge of this new branch of government activity were called ping chun, equalizers, regulators. Actually, like all such usurped functions dressed up in the dovelike plumage of philanthropy, it was meant to enrich the state and its army of bureaucrats. Boats and carts were also pounced on and made to contribute their quota to the growing stream of wealth flowing into the coffers of the state. Considerable gains also accrued from skillful minting manipulations. Several new types of currency were

introduced, like the copper-rimmed coins made of an alloy of tin and silver called the white metal.

The most original type were the notes cut out of the skin of the white deer kept in the Imperial parks. They were 12 inches square and finished off with seaweed-like fringes. Their exchange value was 40,000 cash, and all the kings, lords and members of the Imperial family, when they came to render homage and offer their gifts at Court, were compelled to present their green jade symbols of office on one of these costly skin squares. The great nobles were mulcted in other ways as well, as when in 112 a special levy was imposed on them for defraying the cost of sacrifices. The gold they were thus made to disgorge being weighed and in many cases found wanting, 106 out of an approximate total of 180 lords were deprived of their titles, no doubt with the object of making them buy these back at an exorbitant price.

Altogether the landed aristocracy and the provincial plutocrats fared badly under Wu Ti. His vigorous foreign policy needing a strong centralization of resources and authority, he systematically used his power to reduce theirs. He never appointed them to office, choosing his ministers among men of brilliant parts but most obscure origin. For instance, one of his councillors began life as a jailer, then slipping down—or should it be rising?—to the status of a keeper of pigs. The system of making the passing of a literary examination the main gate to the civil service also tended to fill it far more from the ranks of the people than from those of the highest nobility.

The severest blow Wu Ti dealt it was the edict abolishing primogeniture or, as it was more guardedly put, the edict allowing the great estates to be inherited equally by all the sons. As sons were generally very numerous the solvent effect of this law was considerable. Without violence or bloodshed this death-warrant camouflaged as a favour disintegrated the provincial kingdoms, often stronger than the Imperial Government, into a number of small principalities it could over-awe with ease.

The revolt attempted by Wu Ti's cousins, Liu An, King of Huai-nan, and Liu Hsu, King of Heng Shan, was nipped in the bud. The threat of a judicial inquiry was sufficient to frighten them into suicide, a sad end for so gifted a man as Liu An, whose love of learning both as a collector and as a writer of books had earned him the name of the Sage of Huai-nan (Huai-nan Tzŭ).

Another Liu, Tei, King of Hu Kien and brother of Wu Ti, was also a great and most successful collector of ancient texts, many of which he presented to the Imperial Library. In the reign of Ch'eng Ti the treasures thus accumulated were classified



under the direction of two other scholarly Lius, Liu Hsiang and his son Liu Hsin. They also worked on the restoring of the ancient texts unfortunately with more zeal than discretion. But for descendants of Liu P'ang to delight in poring over faded manuscripts rather than in fighting and hunting shows how far the process of taming and refining them had gone.

Wu Ti showed his love of letters in many ways. At the very beginning of his reign, when he was barely seventeen, he summoned a number of greybeards with a high reputation for learning to discuss the right principles of government before him. A few years later he created the post of the "scholar widely read in the five holy books" (Wu Ching Po Shih) and gave him fifty assistants whose duty it was to instruct officials in the doctrines and rites handed down from antiquity. He was deeply interested in these himself and revived many a ceremony almost lost through long neglect, amplifying and adorning it with new hymns written by himself, and new music composed by Li Yen nien, brother of the beautiful Li Fu jen. She inspired him to tender lyrics, those solemn ceremonies to majestic lines, as for instance,

"Tumultuous the mighty sea ; to its depths all waters flow,  
Serene the Sage's sanctity, round his righteousness all nations crowd."

And from his hymns to Heaven :

"The gate of Heaven opens on pure stupendous immensity,  
There is a mighty inrush ; it converges around the sacrifice,  
It floods the night with effulgence, with ecstasy the enraptured heart.  
The great red road is wide and smooth, the temple hewn of solid stone,  
Wands jade-encrusted mark the rhythm of dance and song,  
Bodies sway in cadences seemingly endless,  
Gyrate like rustling twin wings that join and part in their flight  
and again reunite.  
The stars delay in their passage to pour down their blessings,  
Their glory fills everything,  
Their splendour illumines the purple tent  
With lambent iridescence of shimmering pearls.  
Though so silent and far, sublime Heaven responds to the savour of  
sacrifice,  
Glides down the high standard floating in space."

Elsewhere :

"The chariot of God, it rolls over wrack of black clouds  
Drawn by winged dragons, decked with plumed pennants,  
The descent of God, it thunders like a galloping gale,  
To the left the green dragon, to the right the white tiger.  
The coming of God is of marvellous swiftness,  
Preceded by rain falling in floods.  
The arrival of God a mysterious darkness  
Transmitting emotion from spirit to soul.

The risings and settings of the sun how could they cease?  
The generations of the seasons end not like man's.  
By spring and by summer we are forgotten,  
Autumn and winter remember us not.  
We fail like the waves of the four wide waters  
And vainly wonder wherefore we die."

By such poetry, by prayers, by music, by elaborate rites, by magnificent buildings, by distant pilgrimages, by sacrifices on the crest of high mountains, on the banks of wide rivers, he sought to satisfy the passion that obsessed him of breaking the barrier between the here and the beyond, the visible and the unseen, finite man and the boundlessly Divine.

He consulted scholars for the plans of his religious architecture so as to maintain the great symbolical forms devised in the first flush of the creative impulse. Thus the Hall of Understanding (Ming Tang), which he built in 106 on the banks of the River Wen, was supposed to be a replica of the one built 2,000 years earlier by Huang Ti, deified Lord of the Yellow Earth. It certainly showed archaic simplicity, consisting of nothing but a thatched roof on a wooden framework, encircled by an inner ring of walls and an outer one of water and approached from the south-east by a covered way crowned by a pavilion and called the Kun Lun, from the name of a mountain range so far and so lofty that with its five ramparts and its twelve towers it soared away into fairy-land.

In the palace grounds of Ch'ang-an, on the terrace of Divine Radiance, he raised a "Tower of fragrant Cedar-wood Columns" for the copper statue of the Immortal whose outstretched hands held a dish for collecting dew. This dew mixed with crushed jade and sipped out of cups made of the gold mysteriously won from smelting cinnabar procured endless longevity. As a fire insurance, though, it proved useless. One winter day of 104, the whole beautiful "Tower of Cedar-wood Columns" went up in flames.

To ward off the evil this omen seemed to portend, Wu Ti at once launched into the construction of the Palace of Chien Chang on a scale which made it worthy to commemorate the establishment of a new cycle and a new calendar introduced that very year and restoring the ancient harmony between the numbers of Heaven and those of Earth.

The grounds and buildings covered a surface of ten square miles, with 1,000 outer and 10,000 inner gates. The eastern Portal of the Phoenix had a height of 200 feet, the western Avenue a park of Tigers. The waters of the northern lake mirrored marvellous islands, stone tortoises six feet and a rock-



carved fish twenty feet long. The southern Hall of Jade had a door fashioned like a ring of jade and a gigantic Bird, a Tower of 500 feet and a Terrace of the Gods decorated with representations of the sky, the earth, the polar star, the hosts of spirits and divinities. Indeed it was for them, not for Wu Ti's personal gratification, all this magnificence was intended. Towers and Terraces rose to a height and were decked with such splendour only to tempt them down to earth from their luminous skies.

One of his soothsayers had told him that unless his surroundings resembled those of the Gods they would never deign to visit him. Therefore he had his chariots painted with magic coloured clouds and emanations which ward off evil, his palace grounds filled with lofty tabernacles for the Spirit of the Winds who sweeps and the Spirit of the Rain who sprinkles the road against the coming of the Gods.

For years he firmly believed he would some day see them face to face. Like Shih Huang Ti he sent a fleet of junks over the Eastern Sea to find the Islands of the Blessed and the herb of immortality. The study of the occult came to be at a premium. One of its adepts declared he had seen a being of supernatural size, dozens of feet high, emerge out of the gloom of night ; another that an old man leading a dog and murmuring he wished to see the Great Venerable suddenly melted into thin air. Yet another observed divine footprints on the ramparts of a city and a pheasant-like creature hovering above them.

After some solemn sacrifice an amber aura by day, at night a miraculous effulgence glowed above the altar, while strange unearthly voices were heard wishing the Son of Heaven ten thousand years of life. Then with increased confidence he would resume the endless quest himself, up many sacred mountains, five times up the T'ai Shan, along the seashore, to Yong, the ancient capital of Ch'in and still a holy place with more than 100 temples consecrated to the Sun, the Moon, the planets, the Stars of the Zodiac, the winds, the clouds, the four seas, and all the unknown spirit forces dominating the deep rhythm of the world. Yet he never was vouchsafed a sight of the Gods he worshipped so fervently.

His magicians told him he did not give them enough time. Which may have been true ; they certainly were interested in making him believe it. The only phenomenon he actually saw was the ghost of one of his favourite concubines, whom death had taken from him. An occultist, Chao Weng, produced her apparition from behind a curtain, also that of the Spirit of the Furnace.

In reward, Wu Ti created him " Marshal of learned Perfection," loaded him with gifts, and for months believed in him implicitly. But life at Court paralyses psychic sensitiveness.

After a year of it, Chao Weng's began to fail lamentably. To retrieve his dwindling reputation he hit on a desperate device. Unbeknown to all but a few servants from whom nothing can ever be hidden, he made an ox swallow a piece of silk on which he had written some incoherent formulas. He then prophesied something wonderful would be discovered inside that ox. The poor creature was accordingly killed, opened up and the inscribed silk found. Unluckily Wu Ti recognized Chao Weng's handwriting, the servants were made to talk and the Marshal of learned Perfection sadly followed the ox into the limbo of the slain, after having eaten a dish of suitably seasoned horse-liver sent him by his angry master.

A few years later (110) his successor, Loan Ta, was sent there too, because he also had failed to make good his promises of materializing the Immortals. He was an eunuch, tall, handsome, plausible and undoubtedly gifted with the faculty of making things move by other means than direct contact. This, considered undeniable proof of supernatural powers, won him the Emperor's favour, who made him Marquis of the felicitous Communication, Lord of 2,000 households, Marshal of the five Advantages, Master Magician of Heaven, of Earth, of the Divine Way. He gave him a palace with 1,000 servants, even his own daughter to wife, with a dowry of 10,000 pounds of gold. He would go and visit him himself, and when he sent him the seal of his last promotion his messenger had to be arrayed in a garment of feathers and stand all night on white rushes. Loan Ta did the same, and received the seal standing as if he were the Emperor's equal, the idea being that this pretence of elevation would induce the Gods to come to him. Evidently they were supposed to be particular about their visiting list.

Fancying himself on calling terms with the Almighty, no wonder the handsome eunuch began to scorn the modes of locomotion of ordinary mortals, horseback or carts. He let himself be carried in a sedan-chair to the numerous and select dinner-parties to which Imperial dowagers, generals and councillors eagerly invited him. His mansion was crammed with the costly hangings and presents showered on him by the swarm who courted the favourite's favour.

Some came to wish they had been more circumspect, for when Wu Ti, furious at having been deceived, accelerated the heavenly Master Magician's communications with the Beyond by having him cut in two in the market-place, he gave him an



impressive travelling escort of supporters. Nevertheless, he persisted in his quest and continued to lend his ear to every one claiming magic powers.

Some, like the soothsayers from the conquered South, did their prophesying by means of chicken-bones, others through the trances of epileptic mediums or the visualization of peculiar auras. Thus a witch, "while sacrificing to the Sovereign Earth for the people," sensed an ancient tripod buried in the ground. It was found to be "totally different from all usual ones." It had no inscription, only a chiselled design, and glittered with the brilliancy of iridescent dragon-coils.

The find was hailed as a most auspicious omen, and a clear indication that the dynasty stood high in the favour of Heaven, a useful belief to spread among the people. No doubt some of Wu Ti's zeal for religious ceremonies was inspired by practical considerations, as, for instance, his revival of the half-forgotten cult of T'ai-i, in which the worship of an old polar star symbolized the holiness of the supreme sidereal and earthly unity, as well as the absoluteness of the law which made millions of orbs revolve around one pivot. The political centralization achieved on this model by the Hans needed the bond and the glamour of a solemn ritual to link it up in public imagination with the cosmic order and make it share the reverence men naturally and unquestioningly yielded to the majesty of the Universal Tao.

Translating this idea into practice, Wu Ti raised the T'ai Shan, from of old the holy Mountain of the East, into the officially recognized national sanctuary. Its ground was made Imperial property. At its base he offered the sacrifice "shan" to Earth and the preliminary sacrifice "fong" to Heaven. The great nobles were enjoined to keep up establishments in the neighbourhood similar to but probably on a much smaller scale than those they had to have in the capital.

On the summit of T'ai Shan he performed the final sacrifice "fong," a service of thanksgiving for the prosperity of the Empire and the dynasty and consisting mainly of the presentation of prayers inscribed in gold on tablets of jade.

These ceremonies he surrounded with a mystery and magnificence calculated to engrave them deeply into popular imagination. Passing through village after village on newly repaired roads it must have seemed a vision of immortals, this dazzling Imperial pilgrimage, the Son of Heaven in his cloud-emblazoned chariot, banners glittering with flying dragons and great stars, gold tasselled canopies, tiger-skin saddles, cages of white-plumed pheasants, gorgeously caparisoned horses and elephants, a

mile long pageant of motion, colour, wealth and power. And when the flames of his burnt-offerings outlined the whole mountain against the darkness of the night and the chanting of his hymns filled the deep silence of the night with ethereal music, a windless, cloudless sky seeming to accept his worship, then the people knew that the dynasty of the Hans had been set over them by God.

In this way Wu Ti's faith in the supernatural was far more than a personal whim, and produced valuable results. But as he grew old and subject to frequent attacks of illness, it began to take on a sinister form. The radiant Star Gods with whom he had tried to commune on the heights of sacred mountains and on lofty towers in the still watches of the night shrivelled into malignant demons, terrifying incarnations of all the savage cruelty darkly lurking in the womb of creation. Strangely enough, it was in Kien Chang, the very palace built for the coming of the Gods, that Wu Ti, then sixty-five years old, first actively believed in the power of all manner of intensely wicked demons.

One day he fancied he saw a man brandishing a naked sword enter the Palace by the Gate of Flowers. The thorough search he at once ordered producing no results and no intruder being found in the park either, he forthwith jumped to the conclusion that what he had seen was not a creature of flesh and bones at all, but a demon to whom the sorceries of traitors had given power over him. Most probably he was at the time suffering from a liver complaint which projecting the visions of his fevered imagination into reality swelled to persecution mania.

It took the form of a fixed belief in sorcery (Wu Ku) and anyone whom he disliked or, what was worse, whom his favourites happened to dislike, suddenly saw themselves accused of nefarious dealings in black magic. Terror being the prosecutor and passionate credulity the judge, the accused had no chance of a fair trial. Several therefore, rather than face the agonies of torture and the humiliation of public execution, committed suicide, like the son of the famous general Wei Ch'ing, happily already at peace in his grave.

In the midst of this madness, the Emperor, lying sick in his summer residence of Kan Suan, one afternoon woke up terrified. He had had a hideous nightmare. Multitudes of wooden goblins armed with cudgels had pressed all round him threatening to beat him to death. Clearly some one was trying to bewitch him by means of little figures, which made in his likeness had the power to transfer to his body all the slashings and maledictions heaped on theirs by his evil-wishers. And who would be



most interested in seeing him die? Surely the man appointed to be his heir. So Kiang Ts'ung, commander of the Hiung nu mercenaries and secretly hating the Prince Imperial Chu, son of the Empress Wei, kept on whispering to the sick man, who finally, to get rid of the fears and suspicions, that obscured his own better judgment, gave the treacherous calumniator full inquisitorial powers over the whole of the capital, not excluding the Palace.

Assisted by the eunuch, Su Wen, and a sorceress supposed to be endowed with second sight, Kiang Ts'ung set to work with a vengeance. Wherever this woman perceived uncanny emanations, there the soil was dug up around and inside the house to unearth hidden implements of witchcraft. Nothing was spared.

The floor of the throne-room was excavated. The burrowings in the Palace of the Empress Wei and in that of the Prince Imperial were so numerous there was hardly a spot left on which to place a bed. Then Kiang Ts'ung triumphantly declared he had found the incriminating wooden figures and spells scrawled on silk which he was looking for, and where?

In the apartment of the Prince Imperial!

That unfortunate man, knowing what such an accusation signified, thereupon took possession of the Imperial arsenal, mobilized the guard, and murdered Kiang Ts'ung and some of his accomplices. Not enough of them, though. Su Wen escaped and tore off to the Emperor, still sick in the Summer Palace, and poured his version of the matter into his ear. Now Wu Ti also saw red. The wild blood of the Hans boiling over in both father and son came into tragic conflict. The father hastened back to the capital, entrenched himself in the Kien Chang Palace and called the suburban levies to arms. The son set the prisoners free and turned them into an army which, backed by all whom the madness of the witch trials drove into the folly of revolt, held its own against the regulars for five whole days. The streets ran with blood. Thousands perished. Then came the return to reason, at least for the Prince. Paralysed by the horror of what he had done, he fled from the city, fled East, hid in the house of a cobbler.

But the victorious Emperor, as is the way with victors, took years before he could see the whole lamentable concatenation of mistakes and misfortunes in their true perspective. His blind rage panting for victims went on belching forth prosecutions and punishments. The Empress Wei, deprived of her dignity, committed suicide, the unfortunate Prince, discovered in his hiding-place, hanged himself. His two sons, his wives, his friends and their entire families, all whose behaviour during the

trouble had been in the slightest degree suspicious, and all those Su Wen hated were put to death without mercy. Terror walked abroad and made life ghastly in the City of Enduring Peace.

At last some men devoted to the public good arose and tried to stop the unworthy spectacle of insatiable vindictiveness. Taking their courage in both hands, they remonstrated with Wu Ti without mincing their words. It speaks well for him that though at one time he had made unuttered criticism of his actions, a crime punishable with death, he gave these men a hearing, and even rewarded them for their frankness.

Having listened to them he gradually realized that his son had taken up arms in self-defence and fear, not from a spirit of premeditated treason. When the revulsion came it was overwhelming. Su Wen was burnt alive on the most frequented bridge in the capital, every member of Kiang Ts'ung's family was exterminated and the whole crowd of alchemists and sooth-sayers, who had drawn fat incomes from Imperial credulity, chased out of the Palace. Disillusioned and grieving for the son he had destroyed, he built a shrine to his memory at Ch'anggan and named it "the Hall where I think of my son" (Ssu Tze Kung). And near the place where the Prince had died, he erected the Tower "I watch and wait for my son to return" (Kuei lai wang ssu chih tai).

At a solemn council held in 89 he publicly pronounced his "mea culpa,"

"I have afflicted the people with my follies and cruelties. I repent of the past, but cannot amend it. In the future though I will avoid every thing that oppresses my subjects. . . . I have acted madly. I was the toy of dishonest magicians. They deceived me. There are no immortals. . . ."

On this sad note his long quest ended. Instead of the immortality he had felt so sure of obtaining, the decay of old age crept over him, the end of which was death.



## CHAPTER VII

### DECLINE OF THE WESTERN HAN AND THE USURPATION OF WANG MANG

**B**UT Wu Ti faced it bravely.

The original heir having perished, the most important matter was the choice of his successor. He had several grown-up sons, but they had been sowing their wild oats too freely. He preferred his youngest son Fu Ling, a child of seven.

To select him meant a regency, seldom a satisfactory form of government, the danger spot being the power it gave the mother, who might be tempted to abuse it like the Empress-Dowager Lü of evil memory.

Without a moment's hesitation Wu Ti squashed this possibility by ordering the new Prince Imperial's mother, the concubine Kou I, to commit suicide. Which she meekly did. No doubt she had already begun to bask too openly in the sunshine that seemed to have dawned for her and had besides lent a hand in weaving the black net of intrigues which dragged the first Crown Prince to his doom.

The ground thus radically cleared of female influence, Wu Ti ordered some eunuchs to paint the scene where the famous Duke Chou, holding the little son of his dead brother, founder of the dynasty, in his arms, presents him to the great feudatories as their new sovereign. This picture he solemnly presented to Ho Kuang, a delicate way of telling him he had cast him for the part of a model regent. And Ho Kuang, whose statesmanship equalled his brother Ho Ch'ü-ping's brilliant generalship, did play this part to perfection. So did his co-regent Chin Mi-ti, though the appointment of the captive son of a defeated Hiung nu chieftain to the exalted position of a regent was decidedly daring. It shows how little Wu Ti trusted his own family or the great territorial nobles ; how much his Empire rested on the ability and loyalty of the officials created by his personal favour.

Chin Mi-ti first attracted favour by his tall stature (he was eight feet high) and the excellent care he took of the horses he

had been set to look after. He kept this favour by his unfailing devotion, tact and honesty. The choice of the third regent, Shang Kuan Chieh, was less happy and seems to have been due more to his son having married a daughter of Ho Kuang's than to any special talent on his part, except of course the talent of nimble climbing on the rungs of the social ladder. He had begun on the humble one of a mere archer ; then advanced to the exceedingly useful one of head-groom in the Imperial stables. This brought him into personal contact with the Emperor, who often came to inspect his beloved horses. And now the time had come when he would do so no more, when he must leave them, leave the little prince Fu Ling, leave all his palaces and parks. He was seventy-one, he had reigned fifty-four years ; perhaps he was not sorry to go ; perhaps he felt that beyond the Mao Ling, the Sepulchre of Luxuriant Abundance into which the regents solemnly laid him, he would at last obtain the vision of the Divine which this world, though it gave him so much, always withheld.

For thirteen years his son, Fu Ling, posthumously called Chao Ti, the Illustrious Lord, in his lifetime carefully shepherded by Ho Kuang and Chin Mi-ti, sat in one corner of the Dragon Throne from which his father's might and wrath and magnificence had overflowed in all directions. There were attempts at revolt by his elder brother, King of Yen, aggrieved at having been left out in the cold ; by some tribes in Yunnan ; by the third regent, Shang Kuan Chieh, envious of Ho Kuang, in spite of the fact that Chao Ti's little Empress was granddaughter to them both. Thanks to the excellent functioning of established authority all these movements ended in smoke and the death of their instigators. They did not trouble Chao Ti much. The cares of sovereignty burdened Ho Kuang ; he only enjoyed its sweets, too much perhaps. He died at twenty-two, having no children. His widow, Empress-Dowager at fourteen, prompted by her grandfather Ho Kuang, summoned a cousin Liu Ho, King of Chang-i, to the capital where he was proclaimed Emperor. But proving utterly worthless, in less than one month Ho Kuang and his group of supporters sent him back to his own principality considerably reduced in size and minus at least 200 of his boon companions reduced by a head each.

Liu Hsün, a grandson of Wu Ti's unfortunate first heir, providentially saved from the massacre that wiped out the rest of his family, was now placed on the throne and is known as the Manifestly noble Lord, Hsüan Ti. He was eighteen, of a kind and gentle disposition, well-mannered, well-behaved, versed in the old ballads and the wisdom of the old sages, incidentally



also related to Ho Kuang, whose aunt, the deceased Empress Wei, was his great-grandmother.

The powerful regent, in the inner council of government affairs under three Emperors, died in 68, five years after Hsüan Ti's accession, probably not to the latter's regret. Old ministers are not popular with young monarchs. But he honoured him with a sumptuous funeral, and appointed 300 families to look after his grave. However they did not do so long. The star of his clan had been buried with Ho Kuang. His wife, bitten by the ambition of seeing a grandson of hers on the Dragon Throne, had bribed a Court leech to cause the Empress's death in child-bed, after which she so arranged matters that her daughter, introduced into the seraglio, became Hsüan Ti's new Empress. This happened shortly before Ho Kuang's death. No sooner was the fear of his power and vigilance removed, than aspersions on his government and rumours of his wife's crime began to circulate. Terrified at the possibility of their reaching the Emperor's ear the family plotted his overthrow. However, it was they who were overthrown, not he.

The young Empress, degraded and relegated to a palace that was a prison, killed herself, worn out by despair twelve years later. Three of her brothers committed suicide at once, one was cut in two in the market-place, her mother, her sisters, her uncles and aunts were stoned and battered to pieces there; all their kindred, dozens of families, wiped out. Neither the fame of Ho Ch'ü-ping nor the services of Ho Kuang were remembered with enough gratitude to save them. An excess of wealth and power accumulated in one clan without a corresponding amount of prudence constituted a real menace to the peace of the state and had to be pulled up by the root.

Apart from this mass execution and a few miscarriages of justice, practically inevitable where law-courts and public opinion are swayed by family feuds and friendships rather than by regard to abstract principles, Hsüan Ti's reign was marked by as much clemency as well-worded edicts could infuse into an administration avowedly based on conquest, namely that of the provincial courts with their separatist tendencies, which Wu Ti's energy had only recently brought to heel. The strong foreign policy he had initiated was fully maintained, and when Hsüan Ti took his long last rest from the toil of governing he was deeply mourned by the whole country.

Under his son Yüan Ti the Han Empire reached that mellow-ness which for all its beauty is the sure sign of the closing of a period of growth and the beginning of a period of decline. Authority, losing the pristine vigour of confident self-assurance,

sometimes hard and unjust, never vacillating and feeble, droops into an apologetic attitude and yields the governed a greater share of consideration than they are able to turn to advantage. Yüan Ti, captivated by the idealism of learned theorists, began by cutting up portions of the Imperial grounds for the benefit of the poor, and later with the same idea demolished the memorial temples erected to the ancestors of the dynasty. Those of the founder and his descendants were of course left untouched. The precedent, though well-intentioned, was bad.

The drastic reduction of the Imperial stables was more unwise still. The possession of a qualitatively and quantitatively unrivalled supply of horses under immediate Imperial management, might seem a luxury, but actually was a vital necessity for the safety of the dynasty with which the peace and safety of the country were intimately bound up. The hidden danger of the reign was the elimination of that obvious danger, Hiung nu invasions, which had built the Great Wall and the strength and the greatness of the Hans. The spectacle of the head of one Hiung nu Jenuye rotting on the walls of Ch'ang-an, while within them another Hiung nu Jenuye assiduously paid court to the Son of Heaven, produced that complacent feeling of security in which the discipline of vigilance relaxes and the concentrated efforts to face and overcome difficulties, seeming superfluous, gradually cease to be made. Yet, as the sages had discovered long ago, there is no time at which such vigilance and such efforts are needed more than at a period of apparently absolutely secure prosperity. For prosperity with its suave optimism begets luxury, luxury begets self-indulgence and venality. The first fervid enthusiasm which had seized the rediscovered ideals of honour and righteousness at one joyous bound, fondly believing they could be held that way for ever, had ebbed away into the flatness of what has been heard a hundred times. This added to the elimination of obvious peril, allowed the rising tide of luxuriousness to reach the danger-point, where it dissolves that moral stamina without which no government can long maintain enough efficiency to carry on at all.

Like some fell parasite, weakness began to crawl into the blood of the Hans where before there had been an almost riotous plethora of strength. It often burst bounds, it committed follies, but strength can always find within itself the will to curb its own excesses and pull up in time. A weak blood has no will, it only festers morbidly around peevish caprices.

Yüan Ti, probably owing to the poor state of his health, is the first of Liu Pang's descendants to show this dangerous



weakening of will-power, as he also was the first to allow important state affairs to be settled by worthless eunuchs whom it was his duty to keep in their proper place of subordination. Fortunately he had been educated carefully, his intentions were good and the general tone at court and in the great public services still serious and dignified. An able successor could have obliterated the little harm done.

Unfortunately Yüan Ti's son and successor, Ch'êng Ti, coming to the throne at the critical age of nineteen, saw in power nothing but an opportunity to gratify to the full the passions uppermost at nineteen. Like his ancestor, Wu Ti, he delighted in escaping from the formality of the palace, slipping out at night to various secret haunts. But whereas with Wu Ti these nocturnal jaunts were the ebullition of a healthy love of adventure and had meant hard riding under starlight in the cool breeze of dawn, with a goodly spice of danger, galloping over broken ground on the track of boars and tigers, Ch'êng Ti's escapades were nothing but drunken orgies with companions too low to be tolerated in the palace. Even then no permanent harm might have resulted, had wisdom come with the years. But laziness came instead, which found it pleasanter to have these low companions within easy reach than to be obliged to sneak out of the palace after them. In his city prowlings he had become enamoured of the courtesan Chao Fei yen, who danced so exquisitely she was called the "Flying Swallow." Both she and her sister Ho To were now taken into the inner apartments with the rank of concubines. Till then the favourite among these had been Pan Chieh-yü, the first member of the Pan family to acquire renown. (The historian Pan Ku and the famous colonial governor, Pan Ch'ao, were her great-nephews.) Her exemplary conduct and graceful poetry enshrined her name in gold on the long roll of the models of her sex. The contrast between her and the Empress on the one side, and the intruders from the street on the other, galled the latter so much they did not rest till on the strength of fantastic accusations of witchcraft they succeeded in having the Empress degraded and Pan Chieh-yü relegated to serving her in her exile from the sunshine of Imperial favour. This favour they monopolized and so skilfully, that in spite of the frowns of all indignant guardians of the proprieties like the Empress-Dowager Wang and responsible ministers, the dancing girl was made Empress, her sister chief concubine.

A censor, Liu Fiu, who had the courage to memorialize against this descent into the gutter, was flung into a secret dungeon without even a form of trial. He probably would have

disappeared for ever in its hideous gloom, had there not been enough brave and honest men left to protest against such tyranny. The Emperor had to listen, and the offending censor was transferred to the gang of convicts condemned to cut and carry fuel for the Temple sacrifices, in the scale of penalties considered just in those days, quite a mild punishment for one who had incurred Imperial anger. Therefore, plain speaking, though by no means encouraged, was at least not utterly cowed and repeatedly raised its voice in a bold but vain effort to induce the Emperor to return to the Royal Way. Once one of these fearless champions of righteousness, Chun Yü, offered to rid the Emperor of the tutor who had brought him up so badly by slaying him then and there with his own sword. Ch'êng Ti, enraged, ordered Chun Yü to be seized and decapitated, but Chun Yü clung to a balustrade, which collapsed when they tried to pull him away. This relieved the tenseness of the situation, and a general, falling down on his knees and pleading for mercy, not only did the Emperor pardon Chun Yü, but he would not allow the balustrade to be repaired lest this example of laudable frankness be forgotten. He also listened to his chamberlain, Ku Yung, who certainly put no flattering unction to his master's soul, but reproached him with unsparing honesty, saying :

“ You spurn the nobles and seek the base, what is beautiful and good you avoid, patronize the contemptible and vile. You grind the face of the poor with toil and taxes. The people hate you. For generations the Han, obeying the will of Heaven, have followed the Founder's policy. But you, given over to debauch and drunkenness, only follow your instincts. The example you set is deplorable. Therefore you are justly deprived of posterity.”

Similar remonstrances were addressed to his nephew and successor, Ai Ti, the Pitiable Lord, who, like him, coming to the throne at nineteen, gave way to the worst temptations of that age, sinking even deeper in the mire of self-indulgence. He lavished untold wealth and what was worse high offices on a depraved youth, his favourite, Tung Hien. Sickly and irascible, his answer to those who tried to save him from himself was torture, prison, death. Honesty was becoming dangerous. Consequently, from the dissoluteness of Ch'êng Ti, who at forty-five died ingloriously of an apoplectic fit in the arms of his concubine, through the follies of Ai Ti expiring sick and childless at twenty-five, the direct line went down in swift decline to P'ing Ti, a mere boy, who did not live to see his fifteenth birthday, to end lamentably in a puny suckling, Ju Tzu ying, pushed off the throne by a robust though otherwise inferior blood, that of Wang Mang the Usurper.



This man wormed his way to power as a member of a family whom Ch'êng Ti's indolence allowed to make, as it were, a corner in all lucrative and influential posts. The pivot of their influence lay in the Empress-Dowager Wang, Wang Mang's aunt, the widow of Yüan Ti, who through four reigns watched every opportunity to promote the fortunes of her clan.

Under Ai Ti, she was compelled to play second fiddle, and even that only *pianissimo* with the mute, because his wife and her mother, backed by their whole clan Fu, assumed the leading rôle at Court. But the moment he had breathed his last, like a spider which has been watching hungry and hidden in a crevice close to her web, the old Empress-Dowager swept out of retirement into the Throne Room and pounced on the Imperial seal and thus at one swoop got the power of fattening up again after the lean years of waiting. A great-grandson of Yüan Ti was made Emperor, being a delicate boy of nine, subject to convulsions, not likely to develop a will of his own for years to come. The nephew, Wang Mang, was sent for at once, installed as Grand Marshal, Grand Admonisher, Duke Protector of the Hans. The speed of her movements knocked all power of action out of her rivals. Ai Ti's favourite, Tung Hien, was reduced to whining for mercy at the gate of the Palace, where a week before he had practically shared the Throne. But it is not in the nature of female spiders to show mercy. He was driven to commit suicide, his body flung into a criminal's grave, his vast fortune confiscated. Then came the turn of the women—Ch'êng Ti's widow, the Empress-Dowager Chao Fei yen, she who had danced with the grace and swiftness of a swallow on the wing, and who must still have been comparatively young, was degraded; so was the still younger widow of Ai Ti, the Empress Fu.

In the polite but pitiless language of Court Etiquette, degradation implied an order to join the shades of their deceased husbands in the dimness around the Yellow Springs. With a fierce old woman in control, a nephew in power, and no glamour of veneration surrounding the memory of the last two Han Emperors to protect those they had cherished, what could the poor women do but leave a world the Wangs had decided should henceforth be their special preserve. To forestall any other interference with the maturing of this scheme, the mother of the boy Emperor and her family were also sent to the Yellow Springs, besides about a hundred prominent champions of loyalty to the established dynasty. That this loyalty was still a factor of subtle and incalculable potency is shown by one of Wang Mang's own sons falling under its spell and attempting

to thwart his father's usurpation. He failed and had to pay the usual price of failure—suicide. But worse befell—the Empress-Dowager herself, who had laid the foundation of the clan's overweening power, drew back in fear when she realized whither the spirit she had aroused was leading. With the shrewdness of one who has probed the ups and downs of fortune, she scented peril in her nephew's overstepping every barrier of the expedient and the lawful. He might for the calming of his own conscience and the stupefaction of the people disguise his ambition as obedience to Heaven directly revealed by a mysteriously discovered white stone bearing the scarlet inscription "Let the Duke Protector of the Han ascend the throne"; and again through a copper blade dropped by a sudden dust-storm at the feet of a sacred image and marked yet more significantly "Insignia of Empire." A golden casket for the Imperial seal was also miraculously provided. But the faith was lacking to digest such things. The last two Han Emperors had been weak sensualists not cruel tyrants, like Chieh Kuei or Chou Hsin, and had only aroused passive disapproval, not the flaming hatred with which it was legitimate for an avenger of appalling wrongs to blaze his way to the throne. There was only pity for Ai Ti's early death, tender affection for the child whom the Empress-Dowager had appointed Son of Heaven and who at thirteen was made to marry Wang Mang's little daughter aged eleven.

Altogether Wang Mang's protecting shadow seemed to weigh somewhat too heavily on that innocent boy. When he fell ill and died a year after his early wedding, the thousand tongues of rumour hissed "Wang Mang is his murderer." To make the accusation still more lurid it was alleged that he had put poison into the cup of spiced wine which it was customary for the Emperor to drink on the occasion of the New Year's sacrifice. Such allegations are easy to make. The tendency to represent Wang Mang as a sacrilegious villain and the obvious possibility of a delicate boy, deprived of all that makes boyhood healthy and happy, easily succumbing to some gastric trouble, must be taken into account. From which it does not follow that Wang Mang was incapable of such a crime. The itch to seize not only the inner reality, but the outside trappings of supreme power was upon him. Most opportunely the little Emperor had been carried out of the Palace in a heavy coffin inside a huge sarcophagus. He would not return. The road was almost clear. Obstacles were being removed by the grace of Heaven or otherwise. True, there were many Lius left to continue the legitimate line, five Kings, forty-eight marquises, great-grandsons of Yüan Ti. But those being grown-up men, the rule that



collaterals in the same degree as a deceased could not succeed him clearly must be enforced. Going up higher to Yüan Ti's father, twenty-three great-great-grandsons were discovered. From these the Empress-Dowager selected an eighteen-months' old baby, Ju Tzu Ying, as fit for the Dragon Throne, thus assuring a regency of at least fifteen years. To Wang Mang she assigned the part which the glorious Duke of Chou had played with such skill and devotion as regent for his infant nephew, son of the founder of the Chou Dynasty, and which Wu Ti had once entrusted to Ho Kuang.

For a little while Wang Mang fancied himself in that rôle. Theoretically he admired Chou Kung and Kung Tzŭ immensely, had ordered special sacrifices to be offered to their august shades, revived the commemorative cult of the Chous, bestowed the title of marquis on Kung Tzŭ's sixteenth descendant.

But to a soul so weighted down by selfishness as his, the rôle soon proved too strenuous. Unquestionably he owed a large part of his influence to the reputation he had sedulously built up for himself of a grave Puritan opposed to the dissipations of the last two reigns, zealous for a return to the way of righteousness. He wore the plain garb of scholars, chose his friends discreetly, fulfilled the duties of filial piety in the most exemplary fashion, never allowed even the dazzling dignity of Grand Marshal of the Empire bestowed on him before he was thirty to lure him from his simple and highly respectable style of living. However, to his coldly calculating brain, virtue was only a means to an end, and the end as unvirtuous as well could be, namely extreme disloyalty, one of the blackest crimes in the code of the Chün tze. All the favours the Hans had lavished upon him, he proposed to repay by destroying their dynasty and setting up his own instead. His Aunt recoiled from such a depth of infamy. The Imperial seal which she had seized on Ai Ti's death was still in her keeping, in the Palace of Perpetual Happiness. Wang Mang sent a relation to demand it from her. She refused to hand it over.

"It was the seal of the Hans; they might be a fallen Dynasty but she was the widow of a Han Emperor and would take it with her to her grave. The Hans had showered favours on Wang Mang and his whole family. How dared he requite them by stealing their empire? That was a foul thing to do. His remains would not be fit for pigs to eat."

The lady had some command of language. But she was old, surrounded by her nephew's creatures. She knew his domineering temper, so like what her own had been. In a paroxysm of angry tears she dashed the seal she could no longer guard on

the ground and cried: "Henceforth consider me as dead, and tell him that this day he has ruined our clan." The seal got chipped. What did Wang Mang care? He tried to soothe the Dowager by proclaiming her Mother of the new Dynasty. On himself he bestowed the title of Hsin Huang Ti, wept over the little Han baby, but nevertheless through the mouth of its male nurse made it declare itself his subject and away he had it bundled out of its ancestral palace into a well-walled house, where though professedly endowed with a good revenue and called Duke of Re-established Peace, it was so neglected it grew up an imbecile.

The poor child's deceased ancestors were also evicted from the shrines erected to their memory. Hsin Huang Ti needed building material for the nine temples he put up to his own ancestors, some of whom, namely the Great Yellow Lord and Shun, were ancestors by selection rather than by genuine descent. Even Yüan Ti's mausoleum was not spared and his widow the Empress-Dowager actually invited to a banquet spread in the hall once solemnly dedicated to the worship of his soul, and now turned into a mere dining-room. Horrified at this profanation she hardly touched a morsel, probably grieving more than when she first wept under that same high roof, a newly-made widow, forty-five years ago.

Shortly afterwards at eighty-four, out of humour with a world changed so terribly by a spirit she herself had helped to raise, the grim old woman closed her eyes, mercifully spared from gazing on the ruin she foresaw must overtake a disturber of the dead, so powerful as the great Han Kao Ti.

Evil influences were emanating from his temple—so Wang Mang thought—therefore he sent his bodyguard to brandish their swords at the four quarters of the horizon round the building and scare Liu Pang's ghost away. In addition, thoroughly to discourage any wish he might still cherish of returning to his shrine, the doors and windows were bashed in, the walls scraped with iron files, splashed with an infusion of peach-wood and all the dirt and profanity of soldiers introduced by turning the temple into barracks. But Kao Ti's spirit while in the flesh was impossible to quell. With the added power of immateriality how should some futile fencing-passes frighten him away from a world still responding to the magic of his name?

Cast out of his mortuary temple he was only driven deeper into the remembrance of his people, and a million hearts were set on fire with the wish that his dynasty might be restored. Like the Han seal, the Han milestone only got chipped during the violent interlude of Wang Mang's usurpation. The glory



of a thousand mighty deeds, a hundred years of security and wealth radiated from it. Could the new milestone outshine such a record? The attempt was made, immense armies drummed together and sent against the Huns who had invaded the north, against the southern I tribes, who had massacred their Chinese governor, against the Man and the Koreans raiding the Western borders.

Wang Mang did not lead any of these armies in person. His grand military titles had not been won on the battle-field fighting well-armed enemies, but at Court running to earth some wretched harem scandal. There were no scars on his body. His name had no renown either among the officers or the men who would not make the effort to win victories for him. The most they achieved was to entrench themselves in fortified camps and prevent the invasions from penetrating much further. There were desertions. The resulting gaps were filled by conscripting every thirtieth man. New and heavy taxes supplied the money these expeditions devoured. Four-fifths of the fortunes of officials considered unduly wealthy were confiscated; artisans, merchants, doctors, sorcerers mulcted a tithe on their earnings. Further, he abolished the wise old rule that the loveliness of spring and summer should not be profaned by executions, postponing all these to late autumn, nature's season of decay. Henceforth the condemned were to be put to death at once, which not only precluded all possibility of appeal against unjust sentences, but destroyed the concordance between human actions and the course of the Universe, the very corner-stone of Chinese philosophy.

Such measures were not calculated to turn the people's hearts away from the Han towards their new master. He might change the colour and cut of official robes to his heart's content, alter the names of offices and districts, create new departments, turn the calendar upside down, making the twelfth month the beginning of the year, dilute the aristocracy with a flood of fresh creations, reduce the Lius to the level of the nameless crowd, call his accession an era of renewed foundation, the new dynastic milestone remained a mushroom sprung up overnight from the corruption of Court intrigues, doomed to shrivel into black decay the moment it was struck by the cleansing gale of war, where personal courage decided issues, not softly purring diplomacy. And immediately on Ping Ti's death there arose mutterings of the discontent that was to culminate in warfare and end Wang Mang's usurpation in a blaze of violence.

First a Liu marquis made an attempt to preserve the throne for the Hans. But Wang Mang had laid his plans too carefully

to be unseated by a sudden rush on the Palace. The marquis perished. Not so the aspirations of his party. In A.D. 7 a warlike prefect took the threatening title of Pillar of Heaven, proclaimed another Liu lawful Emperor and raised a hundred thousand men to make good his rights. A similar number, scenting the chance of loot, penetrated so near the capital, Wang Mang could see their camp-fires when taking the air in the pleasure-grounds he had stolen. But he would tolerate no stealing but his own. His troops, still properly fed and paid, marched readily enough against the insurgents and scattered them. So the second would-be Han Emperor failed and faded out of active life.

But there were more Lius left, and Wang Mang, cunning enough in acquiring power, showed little ability in using it. His head teemed with Utopian theories which at that time were projected backwards into golden millenniums of a half-fantastic past, just as to-day they are projected forwards into a dazzling but wholly fabulous future. In both cases discontent with the present vents itself in efforts to alter existing institutions thoroughly enough to adjust them to the advertised standard of excellence. Lacking practical experience, the only teacher of success, these efforts as a rule merely choke the natural germs of progress, produce frightful deformations instead of genuine reforms and replace continuity and confidence by alarm and chaos.

The gap between the rich and the poor had undoubtedly grown too large—too difficult to cross even for the industrious and energetic. Ai Ti had already countenanced a proposed remedy, namely, a stern limitation of the amount of land and slaves any one person should be allowed to own. But, unbacked by a firm ruler, the powerful families and guilds contrived to nullify this regulation. Wang Mang, dreaming of the happy days of old when groups of eight families, each cultivating their mulberry-trees and the five kinds of grain on their own allotted fields, spread round a central plot with the common well, declared the private sale of land illegal. He, the Son of Heaven, was to be sole arbiter of its disposal, in his wisdom he would apportion it so that none should have too much, none should be without. Neither was there to be any more buying and selling of slaves. Criticism of his reforms could be carried on in the border forests for the edification of apes and crocodiles. He himself had no use for it. He also enforced the ancient government monopolies of salt and copper and endeavoured to check profiteering and usury by the official regulation of market-prices and the establishment of state banks which advanced money to the deserving at the rate of 3 per cent. a month.



Something similar had been attempted under Wu Ti—and there was much to be said for these measures. But one thing doomed them to failure. Without a staff of capable and devoted officials, state interference in the economic life of the people, however well intentioned, only does harm. Now Wang Mang's usurpation had lost him the support of the scholars, the very class from whom the best officials were recruited. Their leader, Kung Shêng, starved himself to death rather than serve the betrayer of the Hans.

Consequently the Civil Service was as lukewarm in its support of the Hsin Emperor as the army. And fate rejected him. A succession of natural calamities—earthquakes, floods, droughts, gales, locusts, abnormal frosts and snowfalls—wrought havoc with agriculture, produced famines and the grinding misery out of which the least seed of discontent will raise a monster crop.

Honest peasants, turned into cannibals and brigands, roamed the country in growing gangs. Somewhere a yellow Dragon, guardian spirit of the Empire, had appeared and died in a deep cave. Multitudes gathered to gaze at him. Wang Mang, afraid of political complications, had them dispersed by his soldiers. But presently the soldiers themselves, infected by the rising spirit of insubordination, deserted from the northern garrisons to the tune of no less than 200,000. By an easy transition they became robbers. It took the loyal troops twelve months to re-establish order—not for long, though.

In A.D. 17 riots occurred in three provinces. These also were quelled; but the very next year Fan Ch'ung, a bandit chieftain infesting what is now the province of Shantung, developed the qualities of a first-rate leader. So many gangs coalesced with his, that he soon saw himself in control of thousands of brawny ruffians ready for anything. To unite them by a common badge and to render their appearance as terrifying as possible he made them dye their eyebrows red. It is under the name of "Red Eyebrows" that for nine years these masses spread the abomination of desolation wherever they showed their hideous faces. Wang Mang sent two generals to disperse them, but it was not Fan Ch'ung's villains, it was the Imperial army that dispersed and fled, leaving one general dead on the field.

The consequent loss of prestige amounted to political bankruptcy. What had been purely local risings, comparatively easy to suppress, now swelled into countless outbreaks of one gigantic revolutionary movement above ground here, under-

ground there, everywhere uncannily present, nowhere to be crushed. The spirit of Kao Ti was on the war-path.

Evicted from his desecrated temple, ill at ease in his stone coffin, troubled by his people's misery, he stalked the land a dark, immense, elusive force, inflamed the burdened with bitter hatred against the bungling upstart, drove them together in bands, calling themselves "Pillars of Heaven, Brown Oxen, Horses of Bronze"; put prophecies of the impending restoration of the Hans into the mouth of seers, enkindled the blood of his descendants with dormant hopes, ambitions, dreams. These came to a mediocre Liu, Liu Hsüan of Ping Lin, lit him with a glory not his own, made him the nucleus of an important group of rebels; and they troubled Liu Hsin, the scholar bent over his precious manuscripts at Ch'ang-an, and an old friend of the usurper. The dreams proved stronger than the friendship, stronger than the quiet of the study—involved him in a plot to assassinate Wang Mang and replace him by a Han, preferably Liu Hsin. But Wang Mang's hour had not quite struck yet. The plotters were found out and compelled to end their days by suicide.

And still the dreams haunted men, seeking to be realized, haunted two brothers, cousins of Liu Hsüan, Liu Yinn and Liu Hsiu, descendants in the direct line of a son of Ching Ti's, whom his father had made King.

What remnants of such Kingship lingered in their possession had been ruthlessly swept away by Wang Mang's edict, depriving the Lius of all their offices and titles. But no edict could rob them of the habit and instinct of command. Two centuries of power had bred these in their bone.

Liu Yinn was energetic. To him the dreams came as a call to action. He gathered fighting men around him, launched a manifesto: "Wang Mang is a tyrant. The people perishes. Is it not time to rise, and following our ancestor Kao Ti's example, re-establish order?"

He saw himself as the restorer of the glory of the Hans, enthroned in their palace of Unending Joy. But fate willed it otherwise. The party leaders, afraid his masterful energy might spoil their schemes of private gain, elected his weak and indolent cousin Emperor; and this man, envious of Liu Yinn's victories, seized a trivial pretext to have him executed as a traitor. So his dreams ended in sheer tragedy.

Nor did the cousin, for all the display of enthronements, assumption and distribution of high-sounding titles, lording it over thousands of soldiers, marching into capitals, gloating over Wang Mang's downfall, getting imperially drunk in the battered



palace of Ch'ang-an, find a happier ending. Forsaken by his supporters, driven to throw himself on the mercy of the Red Eyebrows, who had reduced him to the rank of prince, these gentle creatures, tired of sheltering an uninvited guest, found strangulation the cheapest form of hospitality.

They had Lius of their own with the glamour of whose name they hoped to gild the blackness of their depredations, three brothers whom they had dragged off as captives. These they ordered to draw lots for the Throne.

The youngest drew the winning number. He was only fifteen, facetiously nicknamed Juggins and perfectly happy guarding the looted cattle with some other cowboys. When the leading brigands knelt down before him acclaiming him Emperor, the poor youth, his hair unkempt, his clothes in rags, almost cried, he felt so scared. His dream was not power but how to slip away into safe obscurity from the honour thrust upon him. And fortune, partial to his simple harmlessness, fulfilled his dream, allowed him at the final defeat of the Red Eyebrows to deposit his Imperial seal in abler hands and depart in peace to tend herds of his own with the rank of royal Counsellor. This happened in A.D. 27.

Five years before, yet another Liu, Liu Wang, had been called Emperor by a group whose pretensions Liu Hsüan squashed with one swift and angry blow—at the same time squashing the life out of that Emperor of a day.

As the confusion spread, ambitious men, even of other blood, played at being emperor—and for brief spells actually ruled whole provinces, separatism as usual in times of trouble, coming to the front again. All these Kao Ti's spirit weighed and found wanting. Of the many called only one, Liu Hsiu, Liu Yinn's younger brother, was chosen, for he was a man after Kao Ti's own heart. Indeed he resembled him so closely it is hard not to believe in direct reincarnation. Like Kao Ti, he was tall, his nose aquiline, his personality magnetic. To him the dream of power came with a solemn sense of mission, as a burden laid upon his shoulders to carry through not that he might idle in Imperial palaces, but that the people might dwell contentedly in well-protected prosperous homes.

It was the people's misery that moved him, and while his brother plunged deep in a whirl of daring schemes, Liu Hsiu watched the quiet growing of his crops, hoping he could grow enough to relieve the poor.

One day as he was riding to market beside the creaking ox-wagons loaded with grain to sell to fat dealers and give to lean beggars, the call came. Influential men approached him: the

usurper was doomed, the country rising, anxious masses only waiting for Han leadership to be restored.

Whole-heartedly Liu Hsiu threw himself into this work—hard work, full of dangers, difficulties and disappointments. Like his great ancestor, he at first served others, advancing no personal claims, lest rivalries should defeat his main object, the re-establishment of peace. Indeed, he subordinated his private feelings to the common cause so completely, that he continued to serve Liu Hsüan even after his brother's execution. Only when events unmistakably proved that no kind of peace was possible under so drunken and worthless an Emperor as this cousin showed himself to be, would he listen to those, who recognizing in him a Han of the true kind, implored him to mount the Throne he alone could really fill.

Wherefore in the sixth month of A.D. 25 in the southern suburb of a northern town he was proclaimed Huang Ti. The duties the title implied, constant solicitude for the people's welfare, he had taken on himself long before.

Two years earlier Wang Mang's usurpation had crashed down in blood and fire. Desperately the wretched creature struggled to maintain himself, screamed to Heaven, screwed his faith unto a prophecy he gathered from the movements of the stars that no Han would rob him of his power. But quite clearly the Red Eyebrows were succeeding in doing so. Their brigand spirit was infecting everybody. A grandson fell under grave suspicion of treason, having presumed to get his portrait painted in full regalia. A son plotted assassination. Both had to kill themselves instead. Yet these domestic troubles affected his health. He could not lie down, he could not eat, kept himself alive on wine and oysters, got some snatches of nightmare sleep, sitting upright in a chair. His last shred of popularity had vanished; faith in his ability to outlast the gathering storms was failing him on every side.

An immense effort was required. He made it. Once more, as at the beginning of his reign, he drummed together a great army, this time to fight not the enemies of his people, but his people itself—so badly had he used his spell of power. He called his generals tigers and to make them irresistible, added real tigers, leopards, elephants, all the wild beasts of the Imperial zoo to the forces under them. 420,000 men were set in motion, rumours sedulously propagated, swelled them to a million.

With an endless convoy of supply carts, of horses, of fodder, of tents this vast host achieved a length of 330 miles as it wound its slow way East. Picking up the army which had recovered from its defeat by the Red Eyebrows, spread out in a hundred



well-fortified camps, abundantly provided with siege towers capable of shooting clouds of arrows into the city of Kun Yang, held by only a handful of insurgents, there surely was no chance of a second beating.

They reckoned without the spirit of Kao Ti. Reincarnated in Liu Hsiu, it put a drive into his blows utterly lacking on the other side. Though enormously outnumbered, Liu Hsiu fell upon Wang Mang's troops with such force, they broke and scattered, forsook their 100 fortified camps, their siege engines, their stacks of weapons, praying for invisibility as the attackers drove the pursuit home in flank and rear.

Helter-skelter they stampeded towards any sunken road, any gully promising some sort of cover. But a storm burst over them, deluvial rain turned roads to quagmires, gullies to morasses. Thousands drowned, trampled into mud and dirt. In the panic the wild beasts broke loose, tore their keepers, added animal savagery to the fury of the elements and the cruelty of man.

The landslide in favour of the Hans now became ungovernable. Provincial magistrates still loyal to Wang Mang were murdered. Fortified cities declared for the victors. Unopposed, Liu Hsüan's army rolled west towards Ch'ang-an, flanked, preceded, followed by a poison-gas cloud of robber gangs.

Wang Mang opened the prisons, scraped together his own reserves of criminals, armed them, paid them, made them swear loyalty on the blood of a pig killed for this great occasion. They actually marched out of the city gates with the intention of driving off the advancing foe. Unfortunately he looked so strong it seemed absurd to follow the example of a pig and allow oneself to be slaughtered in a cause lost, anyhow. Safety advised discreet disbandment.

There was treachery, too, round gates and walls. The nine great temples Wang Mang had erected to his borrowed ancestors went up in flames. On the first day of the ninth moon the advance guard of the Hans marched into the suburbs. The disbanded criminals, swarming back in a trail of pillage and incendiarism, flung fire at the palace gates. It spread and rose, glared down on the Usurper like the sulphurous breath of avenging demons set on him by the soul of Kao Ti. The daughter whom in the first flush of his power he had married to the last Han Emperor, seized by some delirious hope of atoning for her father's guilt, leapt into the flames and perished. Flames drove Wang Mang from hall to hall.

Still he hoped. Arrayed in purple, armed with the magic

sword of Shun, he pored all night over diagrams of stars trying to assure himself that even now, the city lost, the palace burning, they continued in his favour. At dawn a remnant of adherents to whom he still was Emperor, took him to an island tower protected from the flames by the waters of an artificial lake.

But his human enemies would not let go. They besieged the tower—forced it as the sun went down. The magic sword broke like a reed. Other swords flashed at him, struck him, slew him—cut his head off from his body, which they sliced to pieces.

The head once so full of schemes and cunning was sent to Hsüan Ti, exhibited in the market-place, stoned by ruffians and what the old Aunt in her wisdom had predicted about his remains did come to pass. Something lower than dogs or swine, a monster in the body of man devoured the Usurper's tongue. So quickly does fiendish savagery reassert itself with the fading of good example from high places and the break-up of discipline among the masses.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EASTERN HAN

**I**T took another two years of active war before this savagery was driven back out of sight into the dark corners where it trembles before law instead of overriding it. One battle lasted from dawn to sunset; another into the depths of the night; forty camps were stormed, 300 towns besieged and taken. Two evils always assailing China in her times of weakness—brigandage and separatism—had to be subdued. Brigandage organized into a fine art by Fan Ch'ung and his Red Eyebrows had scarred the whole country from East to West with a wide belt of devastation and reduced the splendid city of Ch'ang-an to a forlorn mass of battered houses and empty streets, all life and happiness scared out of them.

At last in A.D. 27 the claws of these foul beasts of prey were finally pared. Many were slain, more were forgiven and induced to become honest citizens again, though the usual aftermath of war—murders, robberies, a cynical contempt for the value of human life and its moral orientation—took a long time to subside.

Separatism was easier to overcome. Severe pressure of barbarians on most frontiers made the united support of a single control a question of self-preservation. The glamour of the Hans was still undimmed. The habit of obeying a central government shaken, but not destroyed; its machinery only awaiting one strong will to restart normal functioning. Therefore attempts to reconstitute submerged frontiers within the country remained the adventure of individuals comparatively easy to put down. They never swelled into an irresistibly large popular movement.

Towards the close of his reign Kuang Wu Ti, to thank Heaven for the pacification which divine favour had allowed him to accomplish, and as a visible sign to his people that the Han dynasty was re-established, offered a solemn sacrifice on the summit of Tai Shan. A new tablet was erected and prayers engraved in gold on jade buried beneath it. All day he drank

in the vastness of earth spread out at his feet and the immensity of the blue sky above him. Deep in his heart he must have felt overwhelming gratitude and wonder at the ways of fate, which had led him through years of perilous effort from patient tilling of his father's fields to this ineffable height, pacifier and master of teeming multitudes of men.

It was midnight before he could tear himself away and move down, torches lighting his path through the thickening mist.

In him the dynasty experienced an immense rejuvenation. Called the Eastern Han, because the capital was moved East from the desolation of Ch'ang-an to the new possibilities of Lo yang, all the best traditions of the western Hans were taken up again, with the added advantage of experience.

What a profoundly humanizing effect two centuries of following K'ung Tzū's ethical standards had produced, can be measured by the contrast between the treatment the two founders meted out to the men to whom they largely owed their triumph. Whereas Kao Ti's old friends, though at first liberally rewarded, mostly died a violent death under clouds of obloquy and persecution, Huang Wu Ti let the associates of his days of struggle end peaceably full of years and honours on the great estates with which he had endowed them.

With a series of efficient rulers, a roll of illustrious generals, and administrators, eminent scholars, the effect of Wang Mang's midsummer madness were soon overcome, and for a hundred years all went well again with the Sons of Han.

Of course, as in all things human, there were flaws in the fabric of this mighty Empire, its furthest reach stretching from the cold of Siberian plains to the warmth of Southern Seas. Probably the gravest was the failure to uphold an even-handed justice, bound by nothing but rational, equitable and well-known laws, and safe from all interference by the executive. Not that the importance of this point was overlooked. There were many far-seeing and courageous judges who made a firm stand for the sanctity and independence of their office. Able Emperors backed them, even against their personal inclinations. But even able Emperors could not control everything, and there were regencies and times of weak sovereigns, besides the factious families and individuals always and everywhere infesting the avenues to power in pursuit of their own sinister schemes. Between them these forces succeeded in queering the many steps taken under the Hans for the establishment of a sound judicial system, one that would unfailingly protect the innocent, however weak, and chastise the guilty, however powerful.

Wang Mang's usurpation not only checked these efforts but



actively fostered the pernicious habit of using the machinery of the law courts for the satisfaction of private resentments. Under Ming Ti the alleged treason of Liu Ying, one of his brothers, was worked up by a swarm of busy-bodies into a monster prosecution prolonged years after Liu Ying's suicide, causing the death, torture and incarceration of hundreds of innocent people. As during the trials for witchcraft under Wu Ti, magistrates, minor officials and the public allowed their reason to be drowned in a red flood of panic. Confessions wrung from cruelly tortured victims put a veneer of justification on further imprisonments, trials, tortures, executions. At last a censor had the courage to protest with such energy the Emperor could not choose but listen.

Inquiring into the matter he ordered the release of no less than 1,000 prisoners, and moved by further pleadings, rose in the middle of the night to dispatch further pardons. Similarly the Empress-Dowager Têng, during her second regency, liberated a number of people kept in prison on totally insufficient grounds. She ordered the careless or corrupt judges to be imprisoned instead.

Under Shun Ti an adviser sent to the local court of a reigning Liu prince ordered the release of 100 men whom no guilt of theirs, only the malice of private enemies, had flung into jail. In all these cases interference by the executive with judicial decisions worked on the side of equity—but the real root of the evil, the accessibility of the law courts to outside influences, remained unaffected. Time might have provided the remedy, the establishment in the capital of a body of judges, so secure from arbitrary dismissal as to be above fear, so well paid as not to be open to bribery, so sensitive about professional honour as to avoid even the appearance of partiality. In addition, a well-planned circuit system would have made these metropolitan judges carry a justice free from all taint of local influence to the furthest corners of the Empire. But the bane of the Han Dynasty, the comparative shortness of the Emperors' lives with the consequent accession of mere children to the throne, necessitating a regency and its almost unavoidable trail of factious rivalries, frustrated this development.

There were no less than the ten regencies under the Eastern Hans, which favoured the gradual creeping into power of the least instead of the most desirable elements at Court. These purposely left the judiciary a spineless institution, functioning sufficiently well in ordinary cases, but collapsing utterly where powerful interests and violent passions came into play, that is on the very occasions when reason and justice most needed the

backing of a strong tribunal. Instead it would happen that the victims of spiteful prosecutions, far from being guaranteed a fair trial when taken to the prisons of the Chief Judge, would die there by torture or otherwise, if the Judge was at all afraid of incurring the displeasure of their enemies.

In A.D. 84 there is a striking instance of the lack of protection afforded the high-principled against the malice of the envious and the mean. K'ung Hi, a descendant of the sage, merely for having criticized Wu Ti, dead over 100 years, found himself in serious danger of forfeiting his life on a charge of treason brought by an officious evil-wisher. The Emperor squashed the proceedings, but with an incompetent ruler on the throne the end might easily have been tragic.

Again in 124 Yang Chên, the Grand Marshal, a man of such learning and integrity—he was called the K'ung Tze of the West—was degraded and banished to a distant provincial post because he attempted to obtain justice for a former disciple of his, whom an evil and powerful palace clique had contrived to cast into prison in order to silence his remonstrances against their shady doings.

Beaten in his courageous struggle with the powers of iniquity, but all the more determined to arouse the public conscience, Yang Chên left the capital and proceeded to the Kiosk of the Evening Rays on a low hill overlooking Lo yang. There, surrounded by his weeping sons and disciples, he drank a cup of poison, saying he had failed to repress injustice, and therefore was no longer worthy to look upon the sun and moon.

The sensation caused by the suicide of this upright man was so great that the Emperor, who really had caused it by preferring flatterers to truthful critics, found it advisable to give him a grand funeral and bestow offices and gifts of money on his two sons. But posthumous repentance could not bring this wise counsellor back to life, nor undo the other acts of folly to which this weak monarch An Ti let himself be persuaded by ill-chosen advisers. Probably the worst was his giving his foster-mother, Wang Chên, a low and evil-minded woman, the rank and wealth of a Duchess.

This bad precedent was followed by his son and successor, Shun Ti, who even went so much further in this dangerous mongrelizing of the aristocracy that he conferred the title of marquis on several eunuchs. In a still more befogged hour he allowed them the right of adopting sons to whom they could bequeath these newly-acquired honours and the riches they had always been in the habit of amassing, a habit they were thus given an extra inducement to cultivate, naturally at



the expense of the people and the efficiency of the administration.

From that hour (135) it was only a question of time and opportunity when the antagonism between the sincere followers of the Confucian ideal of the Chün tze chiefly represented by scholars and aristocrats and the adepts at graft led by eunuchs should break out in open conflict.

It did so under Ling Ti, then a boy of twelve, and during the regency of Hüan Ti's widow, the Empress-Dowager Tou. Her father, Tou Wu, staunch adherent of the party pledged to political honesty, was made Grand Marshal and naturally tried to take advantage of this opportunity for destroying root and branch the jungle of sinister influences which the weakness of the late Hüan Ti had allowed to grow up.

Hüan Ti had died childless, although, or perhaps because, he owned 6,000 concubines, which meant the introduction into the palace of a corresponding swarm of eunuchs to watch and wait on all these fair ones. He had also found eunuchs, unchecked by any kind of scruples or ideals, exceedingly useful for providing the funds necessary to defray the prodigious expense in jewellery and silks, unavoidable where 6,000 ladies have to be kept amused. There was a numerous group among these led by the Emperor's foster-mother, who out of jealousy of the Empress-Dowager Tou, strongly favoured the eunuchs. In addition, the eunuch nobles outside the palace, the evil inheritance of previous reigns, added the weight of their wealth and rank to those inside, supplying them with a carefully elaborated party organization, the ramifications of which spread far beyond the capital.

Into this hornets' nest Tou Wu, in the full confidence of having right and justice on his side, flung his demand for the punishment and degradation of several eunuchs holding important posts at Court. Two were actually tried and executed, another imprisoned. Unfortunately, Tou Wu lacked the slowly preparing and swiftly striking cunning without which the best cause will lose in the eternal struggle between good and evil. For evil is always full of cunning. He completely underestimated the strength of his enemies—with disastrous results.

The partisans of corruption, alarmed for their lives and flesh-pots, set their whole powerful organization in motion. They even won over a regiment commanded by a general, who having just only returned from a frontier expedition, was ignorant of the real issues, and allowed himself to be misled by the cry of treason, which the eunuchs very adroitly raised against those who were really fighting treason in its most insidious form.

Egged on by a thousand well-armed eunuchs, the regular soldiers besieged Tou Wu in the barracks of another regiment where he had sought refuge. That also got shaken by the cry of treason and went over to the wrong side, which consequently became the winning one. In despair Tou Wu committed suicide. Almost all his relations, friends and dependants were massacred, the remainder banished to the malarial swamps of Annam. His daughter the Empress-Dowager, deprived of the Imperial seal, was strictly confined in a lonely palace fittingly called the Terrace of Clouds.

Great was the jubilation in the camp of the foster-mother and the 6,000 concubines. Henceforth they could do as they pleased in the inner apartments. The Empress-Dowager lingered on for four years, at the end of which time, hearing of her mother's death in exile, overburdened with sad thoughts, she gave up her hold on life and let herself die also.

The eunuchs, meanly vindictive as triumphant rascality always is, removed her body on a common cart to a market-shed outside the city preparatory to burying her with the rites of a mere concubine. But at this point the Emperor at last interfered.

He was now sixteen; and under the shock of mourning remembered that it was the Empress Tou who had selected him as her husband's successor, making the legal relationship between them that of mother and son.

Possibly also other eunuchs, scenting a better chance of squeeze out of the furnishings of an Imperial than of a humble funeral, concluded that greed was more worth satisfying than revenge, and were glad to humour him. So the dead woman, who after all could no longer harm them, was allowed the honours to which she was entitled.

But to the living the eunuchs were pitiless, even when the Emperor once tried to remonstrate against the number and ferocity of the prosecutions. They realized that with a little more skill Tou Wu's attack would have succeeded. It had been a close shave. Thoroughly scared, they were determined never to run such risks again, to exterminate those who otherwise might exterminate them and their network of infamies.

It was a long and hideous fight, one of those ghastly wars to a finish where malicious madness instead of sweet reasonableness controls the destinies of men. It made almost the whole of the twenty-two years of Ling Ti's reign one long outrage against the founders' spirit. Over 10,000 victims perished, all men of high morals and education, whose only crime was not to be criminals, to abhor lying, thieving, extortion, luxury, oppres-



sion, and every form of dishonesty. Some were publicly beheaded, some beaten to death, some made to disappear in secret dungeons or on the road to exile, cooped up in wheeled cages. Here the absence of a strong Bench told heavily against the champions of right and assumed the proportions of a national disaster. For it did not merely entail a miscarriage of justice in a few individual cases, it put a veneer of legality on a campaign of persecution, on the systematic terrorization of an entire class, the most valuable one to the community, that of the scholars from amongst whom administrative posts used to get filled, and who were at one and the same time, the guardians of tradition, the tribunes of the people, the critics of the Government. Attacks on them were tantamount to attacks on the central pillar of the Dynasty, the integrity and intelligence of its officials.

Once indeed a strong judge arose, determined to make a clean sweep of corruption. Three offenders caught in a flagrant scandal of extortion were tried, condemned and executed, another who had openly bought an important post was frightened into suicide. But again the power of the executive to interfere paralysed justice. The chief eunuch persuaded the Emperor to deprive this energetic judge of his judicial functions. His successor took the hint, and bowed to the forces of darkness, instead of attempting the dangerous duty of opposing them. The impunity of evil, the persecution of righteousness were safely re-established. The outlook became so gloomy, so utterly bereft of any hope of a dawn of better days, that innocence resorted to its supreme weapon, its ultimate assertion of the pride and liberty of conscience—the voluntary seeking of martyrdom. Numbers of scholars gave themselves up of their own accord to the terrified tribunals. To remain alive and prosperous in a world of malefactors was considered a disgrace, a stain on one's honour, whereas the halo of saintship, of loyalty unto the uttermost surrounded those who suffered every form of torture rather than bow the knee to Mammon. Their names arranged in groups of the three masters, the eight heroes, helpers, models, rescuers, glow brightly to this day on the long roll of those who sealed their faith in righteousness with their own blood.

But the consequent depletion of the ranks of the intellectuals reached danger-point, since not only the prominent scholars themselves were tracked down like wild beasts, but their families exiled and their sons barred even from candidature to office. Now the problem of finding a sufficient number of able men to work the complex administration of so large an empire, had

only been solved by Wu Ti's system binding every provincial prefect to supply the capital annually with two men most noted in his district for general ability and moral worth. Kuang Wu Ti had also followed a sound Han tradition in bestowing much care on that indispensable requisite for an efficient official class, high-grade schools. But under Ling Ti, as in all times when self-seeking materialism monopolizes power, good schooling and a high sense of honour were a handicap rather than a recommendation for candidates, offices being no longer bestowed on the best qualified but on the best paying. The Emperor's foster-mother and her gang had laid their unclean hands on patronage. The famous Ts'ai Yung barely escaped with his life for having dared to memorialize against this evil. He was banished to the bleakness of the northern bend of the Yellow River. Luckily his reputation stood so high and his fame in connexion with the engraving of the sacred texts on large stone tablets to prevent any further loss or falsification was so widespread, the eunuchs deemed it advisable to allow him to be pardoned. But he kept away at a safe distance from them, realizing that their position was quite unshaken and their hold on the Emperor complete. So complete indeed that their victim never seems to have felt the least desire for emancipation. The fact was they controlled him mentally, because, since the fall of the Empress-Dowager, nothing reached his ears except what they wanted him to hear ; physically, because they were well armed and had surrounded the palace with their own residences, at the same time both sumptuous mansions and strong fortresses, probably much in the style of the well-walled and turreted palazzi of mediaeval Rome. Afraid his suspicions might be aroused if he were to see these ominous constructions, they told him it was not safe for a Son of Heaven to ascend any height. The poor fool believed them and carefully avoided the view-pavilions from which he might have gleaned some idea of what was going on outside the painted walls of the Throne Room. And they found other means of binding him to their cause. They riveted his attention on the embellishment of his palace, an absorbing hobby even to serious-minded rulers. The Jade Hall was to be repaired. Quantities of precious woods were accumulated for this purpose. Four statues and four bells were to be cast in solid brass, as well as some hydraulic contrivances. One shaped like the fabulous Frog, spouted water in the palace, another called the Thirsty Crow was used for laying the dust on the roads when the Emperor proceeded to sacrifice on the altars in the Southern and the Northern suburbs. This crow, explicitly called a labour-saving device, testifies to a



good deal of mechanical ingenuity. No doubt the statues also were splendidly made.

Indeed most arts and handicrafts had reached the excellence which fosters that bane of prolonged commercial prosperity—luxury—with its over-estimation of monetary wealth, its pusillanimous dread of poverty. It was the widespread thirst for material possessions that gave the eunuchs their stranglehold over contemporary society—for they were past-masters at the art of getting rich with no exertion but that of cunning and of squeezing the last copper out of the real creators of wealth. But here, like most blood-suckers, they finally over-reached themselves. The masses, driven to despair by extortion, broke into open revolt under leaders convinced of the necessity of rising before the last possibility of bare existence had been snatched from them. Till then they had watched the uneven struggle between honesty and corruption with singular apathy, being too short-sighted to notice that the peace and happiness of their own lives were really at stake. In addition the period was one of those where the supple creative impulse that produced it, desiccates into the stereotyped dullness of habit and convention. The superb inspiration which the discovery of the ethical treasures of the past had set in motion under the early Hans no longer carried the whole nation with it. It was confined to the select few, partly because it had lost the glitter of novelty which alone attracts the crowd, partly because the disintegrating poison of Wang Chung's narrow rationalism had had time to do its work. This scholar lived under the first four sovereigns of the Eastern Han.

Lacking the deep poetic vision which alone can begin to understand the greatness of sages, he preferred to dissect their writings and took a pride in laying bare small and perfectly irrelevant flaws and contradictions. But the result among the unthinking, always the majority, was a distinct weakening of faith in the value and authority of the sacred canon, and left them far more defenceless against the temptations of luxury and lazy connivance at injustice than they otherwise would have been.

Doubt was in the air, not the fruitful doubt which leads to a profounder study of the philosophical problems involved, only the shallow doubt of the unimaginative flattening into blank indifference to abstract thought in general. This may have been the effect intended by the monumental work of carving the whole of the scriptures into stone at Lo yang, an achievement which at first sight seems an anachronism in such a reign as that of Ling Ti. Quite possibly it was part of the campaign against

the intellectuals, a manœuvre of the eunuchs to stifle inquiry under the dead-weight of a rigidly fixed text and to transfer the interpretation of the spirit of the Canon from independent scholars, to the external correctness of its letter as sanctioned once for all by men approved of at Court.

As to the people in general, for whom both learning and luxury were too inaccessible to be even a dream, ground down by poverty, harassed by exactions, bewildered by the apparent triumph of wickedness, they sought and found comfort in the miraculous. Fantastic developments of what was probably a mixture of submerged but ever latent prehistoric beliefs and a popular misinterpretation of Lao Tzu's Taoism became the fashion.

Chang Tao ling, who died in the preceding reign (156), or who as piety believed ascended to Heaven from a lofty peak, seems to have been, if not the first, at any rate the most influential of contemporary teachers of religion who emphasized its magic side. He studied alchemy with a view to obtaining the elixir of life, and popularized the silent meditation, the diet on dew and mountain flowers, the peculiar breathing supposed to facilitate the secretion of immortal being within man's perishable frame. Either he himself or the glamour of his posthumous fame moulded this branch of Taoism into a semi-ecclesiastical organization under a hierarchy of which he was proclaimed the first head with the title of Tien Shih, Teacher and Controller of heavenly things. Meeting the hunger of the masses, the sect grew in numbers and importance. Adepts multiplied, obsessed by the passion and the power to make their hallucinations such a convincing reality to others as to compel them to surrender the direction of their souls into their keeping. They cured the sick, they remitted sins, they fed the destitute and satisfied the longing of the poor for salvation through righteousness, pathetic in that world of triumphant evil, by prohibiting vice and drunkenness and encouraging the laborious task of road-making and repairing. This injunction seems but remotely connected with religion unless intended as a play on the word Tao, which also means road.

What it does suggest is a vast organization, the leaders of which were anxious to facilitate communication between their widespread groups. The most energetic of these were certainly not slow in realizing that religious fervour could be used as a lever to rouse the masses against their oppressors. Was not theirs the magic that ensures victory, was not a new era dawning in which the pure of heart were to inaugurate the Tao of perfect Peace? The name T'ai Ping (supreme Peace) in connexion



with rebellion occurs here for the first time. A scheme was hatched for delivering the Emperor from his base advisers and placing political power into the hands of the sectarians.

Crudely conceived, the plot miscarried. Over a thousand of its organizers were executed at Lo yang in 184. In retaliation the long prepared revolt blazed up fiercely in several provinces. The badge of the rebels was a yellow handkerchief tied round their heads, hence their name of Yellow Turbans, a name that acquired an odious sound, as happens to all caught by the delusion that perfect peace or indeed any kind of peace can be established by brute force. The clash between the misguided zealots and the Imperial troops produced hideous butcheries. Of the former about 200,000 were killed in a single battle or murdered as prisoners, or drowned in bogs and rivers on their flight. Other thousands were tracked down and executed by the civil authorities as soon as the backbone of the movement had been broken after a year's fighting.

The recrudescence of troubles in 188 was smothered in the blood of a few more thousands, one general alone cutting off 5,000 rebel heads in Kansuh. To these figures must be added the many magistrates assassinated by the Yellow Turbans and the multitudes of inoffensive villagers and citizens who perished lamentably by hunger, fire, violence. On both sides the worst elements came to the front. Brigandage, looting, incendiarism, a trail of ruins reminiscent of the Red Eyebrows marked the path of the Yellow Turbans; battered forts, corpse-strewn battle-fields that of the army. Worst of all, faith in the power of the spirit was shaken, trust in physical force confirmed.

Men believe what their bodily eye shows them, and what they saw was the smothering of honesty under the ill-gotten gains of the grafters and the defeat of the religious enthusiasts by the superior weapons of the army. The majority, therefore, began to look on the army as the one authority—capable of restoring order. The army, not the Emperor. The change was significant. One hundred and sixty years before, the Hans had been restored because the people credited them with the power to free them from the horrors of the Red Eyebrows. And their confidence had been amply justified. But now that the horror of the Yellow Turbans held them by the throat, what was the Han Emperor doing to assist them? Watching the water-jets squirted out of the mouth of a mechanical toy; holding a review of troops before the Hall of Joyful Peace, caracoling in full armour to scare away the emanations of carnage which Court diviners had seen darkening the city and the palace walls. Where the arrows flew, where real danger had to

be met, there his face was never seen. And when it came to be known that he had bestowed the title of marquis on the leading eunuch Chang Jang, the oppressor responsible for the new land-tax, ostensibly levied for embellishing the palace, at a time when whole families, made homeless by the recent uproar, were vainly seeking bare shelter, then the picture the people had carried in their hearts of a Han Emperor benign and just, radiant on his Dragon Throne, lifted so high above the limitations of ordinary mortals as to be qualified to read the will of Heaven and transmit its blessings to his subjects whom he cherished as a father cherishes his children—that sustaining picture with the binding power of its beauty fell to pieces utterly. Instead, the names and personalities of successful generals began to dazzle public imagination, flashing up here and there with some gleams of leadership.

There was Ts'ao Ts'ao, the dashing cavalry officer, a man of enormous will-power and ambition, yet with a turn for poetry and learning. His father was the adopted son of a powerful eunuch, so his promotion would probably have been rapid even if he had not distinguished himself as much as he did in the suppression of the Yellow Turbans.

There was Yüan Chao, an officer in the Imperial guards, popular on account of his hatred of the eunuchs. There was Kung-sun Tsan, who won his spurs fighting frontier tribes and rebels ; Wang Yün, also a bitter hater of the eunuchs, and Tung Cho, an ambitious, energetic man of action, skilful at taking the credit for the work achieved by others, and at that time still playing the part of loyal supporter of the dynasty. For the suppression of the Yellow Turbans, the eunuchs made Ling Ti give him the title of Smasher of the Rebels, little dreaming that in less than five years' time he was to smash them and the whole Empire to pieces.

Ling Ti's military demonstration against the sinister effluvia sensed by soothsayers, proved ineffectual, though he himself had the good fortune to be overtaken by sickness and death while the Thirsty Crow was still working and laying the dust before his chariot-wheels, while the Jade Hall was still resplendent in its new coat of paint and fresh sandal-wood carvings, while the sun still shone on his bronze statues and the sound of his brass bells was still full and uncracked.

His eldest son was placed on the throne by his mother the Empress, assisted by her brother Ho Chin, the Grand Marshal, in command of numerous troops. He had barely escaped assassination at the hands of the eunuchs, and by order of the dying Ling Ti, who was anxious to secure the succession for his



younger and favourite child Hsieh, son of a concubine, poisoned by the Empress Ho. The prevailing morality at that eunuch-ridden Court saw nothing particularly outrageous in this, but it greatly reduced the weight of authority which her newly-acquired position of Regent Empress-Dowager carried with it.

She soon proved quite incapable of filling it or of exercising any control over the events which flowed at an ever giddier rate of speed towards catastrophic whirlpools. Her brother's anger against the eunuchs, carefully nursed by Yüan Chao, led to his demand for their removal from all important posts. Army officers were to fill these instead. This was the first open declaration of the war for power between the party of the flunkies and the party of the militarists, between craft and force. Moderation and reason, the party of the scholars who would have mediated between the other two and alone could re-establish harmony, had been cowed to such impotence as to be eliminated from practical politics for generations. The Emperor was a shy, nervous boy of fourteen; the Empress-Dowager a weak fool, Ho Chin a waverer. Thirsting to settle the eunuchs for good and all he first summoned Tung Cho to the capital with all his troops. Then, suddenly realizing what a double-edged sword this might prove, ordered him to proceed no further. But the Smasher, scenting appetizing fishing in troubled waters, only accelerated his march.

Meanwhile the eunuchs, thoroughly alarmed, ambushed and assassinated Ho Chin. It did not save them. The spirit of murder had been let loose not to be laid for years. Ho Chin's regiment, clamouring for revenge, forced their way into the Palace. Some eunuchs snatched up Emperor and Empress-Dowager and fled to the northern buildings, easier to defend. A Court annalist, thrusting his spear at the eunuch who held the Empress, made him relax his grip. She tore herself away, jumped over a balustrade into the courtyard filled with her dead brother's men, and was saved—for the time being. But under cover of darkness her son and stepson were carried off by Chang Jang, and a group of the most resolute eunuchs out of the Palace, out of the city away north to the banks of the Yellow River. On the remainder Yüan Chao let loose a hideous pogrom. The pent-up hatreds of twenty-two years of oppression raged that night through the brightest halls and darkest hiding-places of the Palace. When the sun rose, its rays spread on pools of blood and the morning air was heavy with the stench of butchered flesh. Two thousand corpses were carted away, among them some beardless youths who in that blind orgy of killing had been mistaken for eunuchs.

Yüan Chao gloated over his work, considered it a cleansing of the Palace. He was wrong. It was a defilement. The dwelling of the Son of Heaven, the deepest foundation of which was the idea that it should be the seat of absolute justice, had been turned into a shambles, a scene of savage lynch law. And the Dynasty was soon to discover that though the eunuchs were bad masters, the source of their power lying entirely in the Palace could always be stopped by the simple expedient of appointing a strong Judge who would make an example of the worst, and put the fear of retribution into the others. This had been Ts'ao Ts'ao's advice when he also had been called on to assist Ho Chin in his proposed attack on the eunuchs. But neither Ho Chin nor his sister had the sense to listen to good advice. They so mismanaged matters that Ho Chin lost his life and the guardianship of the Dragon Throne fell into the hands of soldiers, their swords dripping with blood, their minds lusting for plunder. Not one of the generals now gathered in the capital, ostensibly in support of the Emperor, had any idea beyond that of self-advancement. The men who would have laid down their lives for the dynasty in this hour of extreme peril were either dead or shaking with fever in far southern exile. So it came to pass that when the soldiers sent off in pursuit caught up the Emperor and his brother, slew their eunuch keepers and drove Chang Jang to drown himself in the River, Tung Cho got possession of the two frightened boys and brought them back to the Palace less as his masters than as his captives.

Before the many possibilities opening up to a bold schemer, his loyalty soon wore very thin. According to old-established usage supreme authority rested legally in the hands of the Empress-Dowager while the Emperor was a minor. If the Empress-Dowager Ho had had the intelligence to keep the balance between the rival generals, flattering them all with empty gifts and titles, while swiftly filling important posts with what was left of able, patriotic men, the situation might still have been saved. Instead she allowed Tung Cho to acquire the credit of recalling the famous Tsai Yung to Lo yang and rapid promotion. Neither did she do anything to prevent Ho Chin's men from going over to Tung Cho, whereas her very first care should have been to attach them strongly to herself and her son. In that rising tide of anarchy a loyal and resolute bodyguard was the *sine qua non* for any liberty of action.

She had to pay dearly for her mistakes. Yüan Chao, who was inclined to support her, after a stormy interview with Tung Cho, left Lo yang with a celerity amounting to flight. Another minister followed suit. From that moment Tung Cho's increas-



ingly violent temper and the large number of his troops cowed all opposition. He filled all the places emptied by the slaughter of the eunuchs with his own men, determined there should be no authority but his. That of the Empress-Dowager could no longer be tolerated. Her son the Emperor being already fourteen, was also clearly inconvenient. He must be replaced by his brother Hsieh, a child of nine, promising a much longer regency, moreover related to him on his adoptive mother's side.

Therefore in the ninth moon he made the Emperor go through the melancholy ceremony of his degradation, prior to relegating him with his mother to a well-guarded pavilion. They did not remain there long. Tung Cho considered graves safer.

An insane lust of killing began to obsess him. To his ill-balanced brain power proved an intoxicant that blinded judgment, paralysed self-control and left him a prey to his lowest passions. The unhappy country, after having been ruled for years by knaves and imbeciles, was now governed by a raving maniac—a creature whose frenzied desire for murder and destruction presents one of those appalling pathological cases not infrequent in times of profound and prolonged disturbance.

Consequently there really was a good deal of justification for saner leaders to set up independent governments, as they now began to do all over the Empire. Some of them, with a remnant of consideration for the public good, even leagued themselves together as the Champions of Justice, and threatened a march on Lo yang. Tung Cho, not feeling sure he could keep this valuable prize, determined to destroy it. He had already incurred the hatred of the inhabitants, many of the most prominent of whom he had prosecuted on faked charges of treason and killed in order to seize their property. Possibly his soldiers were restless and unpaid, and he felt compelled to do something to bolster up their loyalty. But even with this excuse—if he had it—his destruction of the rich and beautiful city of Lo yang classes him among the foulest of those perverse monsters whom mankind to its own undoing spawns everywhere in times of political upheaval. The poor child called the Emperor Hsien, the Court, the government offices were bundled off to Ch'ang-an, escorted by Wang Yün. Then all the inhabitants of Lo yang, amounting to several millions, were evicted from their houses, from their city, from all they had saved and earned and worked for for years, driven by impatient soldiers along the high road a weeping, pitiful trail of footsore, heartsore destitutes, to make new homes if they could in the western capital. Hundreds dropped down on the way, perished of hunger, grief, exhaustion.

Meanwhile the man who caused this mass of misery was enjoying himself thoroughly. Shops, houses, palaces emptied of their lawful owners were now also emptied of their contents. Riches accumulated for generations—silks, jade, lacquers, gold, silver, goblets of carved horn, sacrificial vessels of bronze—were dragged out of chests and aumbries, gathered into heaps, carted away. After which the madman in control ordered the pillaged city to be burnt. Nothing was spared, schools, temples, palaces, mausoleums, exquisite wood-carvings, magnificently painted walls—the gallery of famous men erected by Ming Ti, the Jade Hall of Ling Ti shot up into lurid brightness for one hour, and then dropped to dust for ever. The heavenly Frog and the Thirsty Crow, their water-jets futile against such a blaze, melted away. The bronze statues were turned into common cash. Even death was no protection. The Imperial tombs were broken open and systematically robbed under the supervision of Lü Pu, a dare-devil officer who had won favour by murdering his chief and bringing his troops over to Tung Cho. The two made a worthy pair, Lü Pu, the younger man, remarkably tall and of great muscular strength, Tung Cho so inordinately fat he could hardly sit down. They were disturbed in their congenial occupation of looting and burning by the approach of the Champions of Justice. The very word made them turn pale. With what speed the quantity of plunder permitted, they decamped and entrenched themselves in strong positions in the valley of the Wei.



## CHAPTER IX

### CONFUSION

THE Champions of Justice, led by Sun Chien, did not feel equal to the task of attacking them there and confined themselves to restoring some sort of order to the smoking chaos of Lo yang. But the political chaos which now broke loose on all sides swelled into proportions even militant Justice could not cope with. Forty years later a son of Sun Chien, Sun Ch'üan, succeeded in setting up what he was pleased to call a Dynasty (Wu) in the Yangtze valley and as far south as Tong King, which though the reverse of an ideal settlement, did at least temporarily clarify the prevailing muddle. Sun Chien himself fell in 192, during an obscure war against a Liu prince, Liu Piao, busy carving himself out a Kingdom in the Han valley, probably with the ultimate hope of restoring the independence of the Dynasty in his own person rather than in that of his pitiful kinsman curled up trembling in a corner of the Dragon Throne behind the bulky mass of Tung Cho.

Another Liu prince, Liu Chang, was also gathering power and adherents in Sze Chuan and yet a third Liu, Liu Pei, destined to oust Liu Chang, having fought his way up from extreme poverty, was entering on that career of kaleidoscopic alliances and conflicts with the leading militarists which ultimately crowned him Emperor *in partibus infidelium*.

The outlines of Ts'ao Ts'ao's hectic career of marchings and counter-marchings at the head of enormous but well-disciplined armies, of successful and unsuccessful campaigns, of hair-breadth escapes through flaming city gates, from burning fleets, from fever-stricken camps, victories in precipitous passes on the Mountain of the White Wolves over wild Tungusic tribes, dark intrigues and open murders, with intervals of sound constructive activity and moments of relaxation in wine and song, must also have begun to throw their shadows on forecasts of the approaching years.

Yüan Chao, safe beyond the reach of Tung Cho's sword, was consolidating his position in the north-east watched by the

jealous eyes of Kung sun Tsan, who as a counter-move could devise nothing better than an extraordinary fortress surrounded by ten concentric walls and moats, crowned by a mound 100 feet high, bristling with towers. There he accumulated his treasures and thirty million bushels of grain in the sure belief of absolute invincibility. But Yüan Chao undermined the frowning structure, threw fire into it, and brought it toppling to the ground. That ended Kung sun Tsan's little spell of life and power.

Tung Cho's account had been settled six years earlier. He also, following the aggressive suspiciousness of those frightful days, built himself a mighty fortress, Mei Wu, west of Ch'ang-an, laid in provisions to last more than a quarter of a century, and secreted behind its solid walls the pickings of his Lo yang loot, stacks of silks and jewels, 30,000 lb. of gold, 90,000 of silver.

The inhabitants of Ch'ang-an looked on with alarm. Should Tung Cho decide to shift his quarters to his fortress, might he not, before leaving Ch'ang-an, inflict on it the same ghastly doom to which he had condemned Lo yang? His temper was growing daily more diabolical. To displease him by one word or look meant instant execution; the least slip on the part of servants, thrashing to death. Nobody near him could be sure of his life from one moment to another. An atmosphere of abject terror, of speechless fear spread around his violence. But to be served by fear is to be served by treachery. One day in one of his savage fits he hurled a spear at his favourite Lü Pu. Lü Pu, luckily for himself, unluckily for Tung Cho, caught it and escaped unhurt and apparently the incident was forgotten. But secretly Lü Pu brooded over it, began to think that a repetition of this kind of joke might not end so happily. Yet he owed Tung Cho everything. Whereupon Wang Jün, also sick of serving a maniac, whispered that precautionary assassination is not a crime, but common sense.

Consequently, in the fourth moon in broad daylight, as Tung Cho was on the point of alighting from his chariot at the Palace gate, some of Lü Pu's men fell upon him, and Lü Pu, to whom he shouted for help, finished him off. The huge body, headless and bleeding, was dragged to the market-place, where the populace danced round it, frantic with joy. Some low humourist fixed a lighted wick into it and for days the prodigious mass of fat burnt and filled the early summer air with the fetid odour of its fumes. But the people were soon to discover that rejoicing, even over the riddance from a monster, was out of place. The learned Tsai Yung, the last representative of the old school, foresaw what was coming when he heaved a sigh on hearing of



Tung Cho's death—a sigh which cost him his life. Cruel as Tung Cho had been, he at least had kept the bulk of his soldiers outside the city. These, led by Li Ts'ui and Ku fan, now came pouring in under colour of avenging their master's death; in reality glad of a pretext to indulge in plunder. Wang Yün, who had assumed the Regency, was slain while trying to placate them. Lü Pu, newly created Commander-in-Chief, bolted just in time and sought refuge miles away. The young Emperor feared his new masters more than the old, especially when it came to actual blows between them, and Li Ts'ui carried him off to his barracks, handing the Palace over to the tender mercies of his men. They sacked it thoroughly, then set it on fire—perhaps in loving memory of their departed chief. Li Ts'ui even went so far as to call in the usual allies of oppressors, barbarian levies. The defenceless citizens of Ch'ang-an had the joy of seeing Tibetan and Tungusic ruffians prowling round the streets, leering at the women, nosing for loot. Not that there was much left to loot. The three years of Li Ts'ui's and Ku fan's swaggering destroyed all sense of security, every incentive to work, any possibility of regular provisioning from outside. Famine arose in so terrible a form that the Emperor was thankful for some putrid bones and the desperate devoured each other. The only good it did was to drive the barbarians away.

But it became equally impossible for the Chinese troops to maintain themselves in that stricken neighbourhood. A move was decided on from the hunger of the western to the desolation of the eastern capital. The Imperial progress through a ruined country, a sullen decimated population, was a pitiful crawl. Angry fights between Li Ts'ui, Ku fan and similar worthies, all anxious to legitimize their designs by obtaining possession of the Emperor, provided the only diversion.

Once some Hun cavalry interfered, another time the Court, if that pitiful group of hungry, weary humans, their jewels lost, their silks in rags, could still be called by so grand a name, lived for months on the charity of the local magistrate in shutterless, doorless buildings, protected only by a hedge of thorns. At last, after months of misery, Hsien Ti was once again in Lo yang—not the beautiful Lo yang he had left six years before in the pride of gorgeous palaces and mansions, busy streets and crowded shops; a Lo yang of crumbling walls, and caved-in roofs, of “thorns and brambles shooting up to the sky.”

He was now fifteen, duly provided with Empress and concubines, if with nothing else. All the horrors he had seen, all the humiliations he had suffered in his short life, the utter desolation that stared at him out of the wreck of ancestral palaces and

tombs may well have stifled those dreams of exploits and achievement which make the heart of youth beat faster. And Ts'ao Ts'ao took care that no dreams of a Han Emperor should ever reach fulfilment. It was he who now assumed control.

With his large and well-disciplined army he bore down on the dishevelled military assortment round Lo yang, cowed it into allegiance, and with great protestations of loyalty started putting order in the sorry tangle of the Emperor's affairs. *His* order. Under colour of greater comfort, in reality for safer custody, Hsien Ti was moved to Hsü Chang, Ts'ao's own headquarters. To give this arrangement a show of permanence, ancestral temples and altars to the Spirit of the Grains and Harvests were erected and Ts'ao Ts'ao received the title of Marquis of Armed Peace—which meant a maximum of armament and a minimum of peace—for the fourteen remaining years of Ts'ao Ts'ao's life were filled with attempts to subdue other aspirants to power.

By dint of much fighting and killing he succeeded with some ; but Sun Ch'üan in the Kingdom of Wu in the South-east and his brother-in-law, Liu Pei, in that of Shu in the South-west established and maintained their independence and Ts'ao Ts'ao did not get beyond consolidating the northern provinces under his immediate rule as the Kingdom of Wei.

The disintegration of the Han Empire into three sovereign states was an accomplished fact even before it became an openly acknowledged one nine months after Ts'ao Ts'ao's death, when at the end of 220, Hsien Ti, tired of the dangerous and ungrateful rule of Emperor *de jure* and prisoner *de facto*, went to the Temple of his Ancestors and in all humility and sorrow confessed to them that having failed to maintain their inheritance he had sent the Imperial robes, seals, jewels, thrones and banners to Ts'ao Pei, the son of Ts'ao Ts'ao, who had succeeded his father in his position of Guardian of the Emperor and King of Wei. Ts'ao Pei, after the three refusals required by the rites, accepted the honour, proclaimed himself Emperor of a new Dynasty, that of Wei, and allowed Hsien Ti to retire into the safe obscurity of private life as Duke of Chang Yang. The poor man was probably devoutly thankful for this descent from a height which for him had held all the perils and none of the possibilities of power. His spirit had been completely broken by the massacre of his wife, his favourite concubine and about 100 relations which Ts'ao Ts'ao ordered in revenge for a plot against his life. Tamed by his new Empress, a daughter of Ts'ao Ts'ao's, Hsien Ti could not by any stretch of imagination be any longer considered more formidable than a caged canary, which accounts



for his being suffered to flap his atrophied wings for another fourteen years, probably the happiest of his ineffectual existence. Then he died a natural death, childless, the humbled last of a glorious line. Or nearly the last.

There was a Liu left, Liu Pei, lacking none of the essentials for re-establishing the greatness of the Hans, none except time and luck. Time was against him, inasmuch as it cut his life short through sickness, a bare three years after Hsien Ti's abdication, and luck failed him in his son Liu Ch'an, who inherited his father's position but none of the qualities by which it had been won.

Liu Pei, a descendant of the great Han Wu Ti's father, Ching Ti, had many of the characteristics of the founders of the first two Han Dynasties, the tall stature, the aquiline nose, the tenacity which carves triumph out of defeat, the kind-heartedness, the gift of friendship, of winning the devoted service of able men. Among these, two famous warriors, Kuang Yü and Chang Fei, formed with Liu Pei an inseparable trio which a skilful author of the fourteenth century built up into one of those widely popular romances reminiscent though on a much larger scale of that of Dumas' "Three Musketeers."

Kuang Yü, who in his lifetime typified the old ideal of the Chün tze, reduced according to the taste of the time to the code of a soldier, achieved deification in 1594, when a Ming Emperor created him God of War—of war envisaged as the struggle of good against evil. Since which time his image clad in full armour, pensively stroking his long, sparse, black beard, can be seen in hundreds of temples, his many doughty exploits painted on the walls. The end of his mortal career, however, was tragic. Taken prisoner by Sun Ch'üan in one of those wars which seem so futile now, though at the time they absorbed the energies of intelligent men, he was summarily beheaded. In another war organized to avenge this execution, Chang Fei was murdered by his own soldiers and Liu Pei contracted the illness of which he died. However, the friend who influenced Liu Pei's actions most was Chu-ko Liang, strategist, statesman, inventor actual or reputed of several mechanical contrivances useful in war—for invention, too, in those chaotic days had become militarized. It was largely owing to Chu-ko Liang's assistance that Liu Pei built up a power in the south-west sufficiently compact to be used as a jumping-board from which to reunite the broken pieces of his ancestors' empire. The moment he heard of Hsien Ti's abdication, to which rumour at once added that of his death, he took up the task of rehabilitating the dynasty. The Han milestone on which so much strength and greatness had

been written, was not to be knocked down by the pretensions of a Ts'ao upstart. Liu Pei proclaimed himself Emperor with his residence at Cheng-tu in Szechuan pending the longed-for moment when he could revive the glory of Lo yang and Ch'ang-an. This hope remained unfulfilled, notwithstanding all Chu-ko Liang's exertions, partly on account of the strength of the opponents, partly because the magic had gone out of the name of Han. Only an unusually able Emperor could have revived it, and Liu Pei's son and successor proved the very reverse. He drifted into laziness and sensuality, and when Chu-ko Liang died in 234 any chance of the work of reunification being accomplished under his reign and by his dynasty came to an end.

For meanwhile (in 229) Sun Ch'üan had also felt powerful enough to start yet another rival dynasty, that of Wu, calling himself the great Emperor, Ta Ti, with all the ceremonial pertaining to an Emperor breaking out in brand-new splendour in his capital on the Yangtze now called Nanking.

For over forty years three Emperors glared at each other across uncertain frontiers, their troops coming to serious blows whenever ambitious generals needed occupation. Romance has glorified this period called that of the Three Kingdoms, as the golden age of chivalry and valour. In reality it was a letting off in futile fireworks of the reserves of strength accumulated under the great Han Emperors. Reserves both of moral and material strength. Already the second generation indulging in this expensive pastime was drifting towards bankruptcy—the third plunged headlong into it.

The rejuvenation of the Han Dynasty which Liu Pei had worked for and might have achieved, was nipped in the bud by the armies of Wei, kept in a greater state of efficiency partly owing to the military needs of the northern provinces, always in the shadow of the nomad menace, partly on account of the war-like talents of Ssü-ma Ch'ao. Son of Ssü-ma I, who grew into power as Ts'ao Ts'ao and Ts'ao Pei's right-hand man, this unscrupulous schemer began to see, seize and contrive chances of doing to the Ts'ao dynasty what it had done to the Eastern Hans.

But first the Shu Han had to be swept out of the way. One year's campaign did it, notwithstanding the precipitous mountain-chains protecting the country. The capital was ill-defended, Liu Ch'an more intent on preserving his life than his dignity. Bound and followed by his coffin, he humbly surrendered to the mercy of the Wei general, who realizing his harmlessness, burnt the coffin and sent its would-be tenant to Lo





KUAN YÜ' (+ 219 A.D.). (DEIFIED IN 1594 AS KUAN TI)  
READING THE 'BOOK OF HISTORY' IN HIS TENT BY CANDLELIGHT





yang. There he was made Duke of Peaceful Joy and allowed to end his days as he had led them hitherto among wine-cups and women. And there he died in 271, leaving no son, no glorious record to breathe new life into the Han tradition.

So the second effort to save the dynasty, unlike the first, ended in almost nothing, remained a mere postscript hastily scribbled without any style or significance of its own. The Han milestone was definitely thrown down, hollowed out from within. Wang Ch'ung's superficial but highly corrosive rationalism first dispelled that aura of reverence and mystery without which the loftiest ideals soon lose their hold on the unthinking majority. The luxury following in the wake of a thriving foreign trade continued this destructive work by focussing men's desires so much more on material than on spiritual values, the balance between self-control and lust of possession was destroyed. A pandemonium of greed broke loose in which the unscrupulous naturally obtained and retained the upper hand, till out of the ruins and misery their incompetence spread everywhere, there arose the need and the possibility of a change of heart. This manifested itself in two ways: in a return to the old ideals of a noble citizenship based on the purity of the individual mind, the "jen Tao," the way of a noble humanity, but even more in the following of a new ideal, Buddhism. Its gospel of the utter unimportance not only of the material goods for which men had been envying and slaying each other for centuries, but also of all social relations when compared to the supreme value of detachment from worldly bonds and absorption in the transcendental, poured the oil of voluntary renunciation on the tempestuous waves of uncontrolled desire which had washed the ground away from the foundations of the Han milestone. It had been tottering so long, its final fall did not at the time seem to mark any profound change of direction, the more so as what it stood for, a centralized state with strong armies guarding or enlarging the frontiers and a carefully selected and trained bureaucracy assuring cohesion within, remained an ideal too deeply embedded in the nation's thoughts and habits to allow the Three Kingdoms' separatism to acquire any permanence.

No bonds of deeply-rooted loyalty united the population of these Kingdoms to the family who had obtained power merely through the fortune of war and the accident of luck. Moreover, though the founders of these ephemeral dynasties were men of energy and constructive ability, their sons and grandsons shrank away from the difficulties inherent in all unmaturing tenure of sovereignty, and instead of devoting their life to overcoming them, preferred to squeeze as much pleasure as they possibly

could out of a privileged position which they felt slipping away from under them. Therefore Ssü-ma Yen, standing in the full blaze of his father Ssü-ma Chao's military glory, had no difficulty in pushing the Wei Emperor, Yüan Ti, a youth of twenty and grandson of Ts'ao Ts'ao's, off the throne four months after his father's death in 265, when he proclaimed himself the first Emperor of a new dynasty, that of Chin.

Nor did the conquest of the Kingdom of Wu, though only accomplished fifteen years later (280), require many campaigns.

Its ruler, Sun Hao, a grandson of Sun Ch'üan, was not the man for whom his soldiers or his people were willing to shed their blood. Sodden with drink and debauchery, full of the low cunning and suspicious quarrelsomeness of drunkards, he would compel his officers to get intoxicated in order to make them blurt out their secret thoughts. Whenever these seemed disloyal or even merely disrespectful, the unfortunate culprits had their eyes gouged out, their faces flayed or their teeth broken. Nor would he allow any of his officers to get their daughters married before the purveyors of his harem had picked out the best. If any he had set his eyes on were not handed over voluntarily they were carried off by force. Five thousand concubines were collected in the Palace for his delectation—besides several Empresses, an unheard-of infraction of proper custom, showing how far this pseudo Son of Heaven had strayed from the great Royal Road and torn up the bonds of morality which constituted the strength of the Han Empire. No wonder that what defence he attempted against the invading armies of Chin melted away at the first impact. Like the last Han Emperor, he presented himself to Ssü-ma Yen's victorious general outside the gates of his capital bound and followed by a coffin.

He received the same indulgent treatment, was made Marquis of Restored Allegiance with an income on which he could end his days comfortably in Lo yang. But he only lived another three years. Perhaps he pined after his 5,000 concubines. They had become the property of the Chin Emperor, who, though a man of considerable intelligence, was inordinately fond of women, a failing which altogether seems to have been the fashionable vice of the age. He, too, had the daughters of officers and prominent citizens abducted, it is said to the number of 5,000, and when to these he added Sun Hao's thousands he certainly could not complain of any lack of female companionship. It left him little time for state affairs, the control of which he allowed to drift into the hands of his father-in-law Yang Tsun and his two brothers. What was worse, the expense which the upkeep of a seraglio of such dimensions involved,



tempted him to connive at the sale of important posts, a lapse into the very error that had ruined the Hans. Further, the example of such excessive self-indulgence poisoned the moral atmosphere of the Court, prevented the growth of that quiet dignity and restraint, that determined concentration on the serious side of life, without which no newly-established power can lay its foundations four-square with the Tao, the will and the way of Heaven.

From the first the new dynasty was jerry-built. It started brilliantly enough. The reunification of the Empire, the resuscitation of Lo yang as the capital of a single Sovereign, the abolition of militarist tyranny and return to the administrative system of the early Hans, the clearing of the western trade-routes from nomad irruptions, the building of a bridge of boats across the Yellow River, the collecting of over 30,000 books for the Imperial library, all these things were real achievements and looked like the beginning of a new era of peace and prosperity. But somehow the splendid impulse which had produced them died down, lacked the vitality to carry them through the difficulties of consolidation to the harvests of maturity. The righteousness of a great scholar and high state official like Ho Hsün, "pure as ice and jade," who living in a mere hut set an example of that stern simplicity which is the surest guarantee of incorruptibility; the military skill of a general like Ma lung whose sharp-shooters held the barbarian menace at bay for twenty years, were in the long run unable to prevail against the paralysis of all rational government that befell the Court on Wu Ti's death in 290.

Of his twenty-five sons hardly any seems to have had any idea of the responsibility of position, and the one he selected as his heir, though already thirty, was weak-willed and weak-brained to the point of idiocy. He was the son of the Empress Yang, daughter of the Yang-tsun, to whom Wu Ti left the worries of politics while he himself was kept bewilderingly busy driving about in a sheep-drawn carriage through the length and breadth of his pleasure-grounds from one fair concubine's arbour to another.

His successor, Ssü-ma Chung, who became the Emperor Hui, besides being the son of an ambitious mother was the husband of a still more ambitious wife, the Empress Chia. Her will to power, far from being inspired by any talent for its exercise, was merely an expression of the boundless vanity, the jealous egotism, which even while she was only a Princess, had made her kill every concubine whose rivalry she feared. Further, he was in the unhappy position of being the brother, the cousin and

the nephew of countless Ssü-ma princes, all wondering whether his known incompetence might not sooner or later afford opportunities for stepping into the position which they connected above all else with the revelling in unlimited supplies of wealth and women. And behind these, there were the usual schemers, Court flunkies or generals—waylaying every chance of unlaborious promotion and enrichment.

No sooner was Wu Ti's restraining presence removed than all these rival ambitions collided and exploded with a ferocity, a suicidal violence explicable among civilized men and women only as the result of years of carelessness, not only of the principles, but even of the forms of proper conduct. Systematic campaigns of lies and calumnies, murders in every shape and form, stabbings, poisonings, starvings to death in secret dungeons, cruel executions in public squares, massacres of entire families, shameless lootings and confiscations, street brawls lasting for days, riots lasting for months, a gangrene of hate, envy, fear, persecutions, plots and counter-plots festering for years—that was the harvest which shot up from the wild oats the founder of the dynasty had sown in such profusion.

In the midst of it, his half-witted heir was perfectly helpless. The various cliques striving for power, his mother, his grandfather, his great-uncle, his wife, his ministers, his generals, his brothers, the eight revolting princes, and their ministers and generals, played a game of battledore and shuttlecock with him, tossing him about between their hard-hitting rivalries, one fond relative locking him up in a citadel, another pulling him out of it and dumping him down on the throne again, a third dragging him with him on his campaigns, arrows grazing his terrified face, a fourth packing him off in a springless ox-cart on a wild flight south with nothing to eat and the shoes dropping off his blistered feet, a fifth escorting him back to Lo yang, but then once more turning him out of his palace because there was no way of satisfying the unpaid soldiers than allowing them to loot it. Bundled away to Ch'ang-an, Tungusic cavalry, under a Chinese general, scared him back to Lo yang, where Ssü-ma Yüeh finally dispatched him to the Yellow Springs by means of a poisoned cake. At least so Court gossip affirmed. But as the poisoned cake is part of the stock-in-trade of the annalists' chamber of horrors, Hui Ti possibly never ate it. Indeed, his masterful relatives were not given to feeding him on cakes. He was forty-six when his days came to an end.

The Ssü-mas were not a long-lived race, as in fact few Imperial families ever were. So he may well have died naturally of sheer weariness, not a surprising termination to sixteen years



of alarms and excursions. But almost all the other actors in that orgy of madness died a violent death. At its close there were only three of Wu Ti's twenty-five sons left, the youngest of whom, Ssü-ma Chih, was made Emperor by Ssü-ma Yüeh. The reason why this old schemer did not assume the Imperial dignity himself, was probably because such black clouds lowered on the political horizon, the prospect of finding oneself in as exposed a place as the throne at the time of their bursting was by no means tempting. For while the Ssü-mas had wasted their armed forces against each other, in cautious driblets at first, then in ever-increasing numbers, the nomads had burst upon and into the Chin empire. The 3,000 li wall was wiped out as a frontier—the River ceased to be a boundary, even the mountains of Shantung were no longer a protection. In their thousands they came, Huns, Tangutans, Tibetans, Tungusians. Ssü-ma Yüeh himself had called in some of the latter to help him overawe his own countrymen. It was a corps of their cavalry fighting under his banners who gave the north-western districts a foretaste of the approaching desolation, when in 306 they entered Ch'ang-an, looted it mercilessly and massacred 30,000 of its inhabitants, whose sole offence was that they tried to protect their own property. Terror-stricken the rest of the population fled into the hills, their only food acorns, their only shelter trees and rocks.

Three years before Lo yang had fared almost as badly at the hands of one of the Ssü-ma prince's generals, whose army was probably also largely recruited among barbarians. He, however, was more moderate—he only killed 10,000 citizens. But fate was pitiless—and did not allow the unfortunate town a breathing space of more than eight years, before hurling down upon it the full fury of its doom. Swarms of Hun horsemen began to draw their hungry circles ever nearer, ever closer round it. They had before swooped down on the funeral procession which was moving slowly and solemnly towards the eastern seaboard to bury Ssü-ma Yüeh in his own estates of Tung Hai.

He had left Lo yang, left the young Emperor, as his ill-wishers whispered, because he was afraid of facing the Huns, for three years now at open war with the Empire. He took 40,000 troops with him, trekked away to the south-east, to Hu and died there in his bed.

For all that he was not to escape the grip of the Huns. They broke open his coffin, they burnt his corpse, they cursed him as a coward and a cur. The 10,000 soldiers protecting the convoy perished, the forty-eight Ssü-ma princes escorting it as mourners were murdered in prison in the dead of night, the

Huns, though barbarians, feeling some qualms about letting the light of day shine on the slaughter of unarmed prisoners of war.

After this exploit they turned their horses' heads due west towards Lo yang, the once resplendent capital, now awaiting its fall in a stupor of misery, half its population dead of hunger, most of its garrison fled or degenerated into brigands—the few who still had anything left and the energy to guard it turning their houses into small citadels strengthened by moats and walls.

Deserting officers implored the Emperor to escape with them. He would not abandon either his people or his ancestral shrines. But individual courage could no longer shield these. The Huns beat down the last remnants of resistance, burst into the town, broke into the palace, seized Emperor and Imperial seals, massacred the heir-presumptive and 30,000 citizens, rifled dynastic tombs and temples, burnt yamens, palace, library, and what was more terrible than all, settled among that desolation as its conquerors and masters, determined never to let go.

A few months later they seized Ch'ang-an, but there at least they were not to remain in possession—anyhow not yet. A Chin general wrested it from them and actually made it once more the centre of a somewhat ghost-like but still tenaciously live Imperial authority. It was Ssü-ma Yeh, a man over forty and a grandson of the founder of the dynasty, who had the faith and the courage to take over the burden of trying to save it. He called himself Prince Imperial, not Emperor, in case Huai Ti should return from captivity; not a likely event, though, considering the pleasant way the Huns had with their prisoners. Nor did it happen. Though at first Huai Ti was treated fairly well, given the title of Duke of Peace and a Hun princess, his captor could not long resist the joy all low minds find in humiliating and tormenting a defeated enemy. He made him serve him as cupbearer, rinse his goblets, perform menial offices at public banquets—till, getting tired of the noble sport of baiting a defenceless man, he had him killed—no one knows how. Hearing which Ch'ang-an went into mourning and Ssü-ma Yeh mounted the throne—not the gorgeous Dragon Throne of old inlaid with jade, cushioned with brocades of gold, screened by panels deeply carved in precious wood,—a mere stool placed in some corner of the battered palace which had been cleared of the weeds and brambles running riot everywhere.

In the whole of Ch'ang-an there were only four carriages left



and less than one hundred families. The Huns were encamped so near they actually penetrated into the town one night, drove the Emperor to seek refuge in a tower and set fire to the remnants of the palace. Luckily reinforcements arriving from the south succeeded in beating them off again. Optimism reasserted itself. By way of encouragement the new Emperor gave his reign the name of Established Prosperity. Established Misery would have been truer to facts, although for nearly four years this forlorn post of the Chins did successfully hold out against the swelling masses of the Huns.

But the struggle grew too uneven. The entire north was firmly held by the Huns, the attempt to rouse the newly-constituted tribe of the Tobas against them, in any case a dangerous expedient, proved ineffectual. In scattered districts in the north-west and east the loyalty of many Chinese governors and generals gave way under the strain of prolonged warfare and dwindling resources. They thought it better to live in friendship with a growing power than to perish lamentably in the cause of a decaying one.

The South was not sufficiently attached to the dynasty to respond very warmly to its appeals for help and never sent troops in the numbers required to produce decisive results. Consequently numerical superiority, impossible to beat where it can be increased at will, remained on the side of the Huns.

Before long they attacked Ch'ang-an in earnest. As they themselves had no mechanical inventiveness and were not supplied with siege batteries from other sources, they resorted to that most cruel of all war weapons—starvation. Through the icy winter months it did its fell work in the closely-invested city, drawing the strength out of human bodies, the spirit out of human souls. At last there was nothing left to eat but some sour pastry, nothing left to do but to surrender, to throw oneself on the mercy of an enemy who jeered at mercy and only believed in brutal trappings on a fallen but still dreaded foe.

The Emperor was dragged off to Ping Yang, where the Hun chieftain, Liu Tsung, who also called himself Emperor, had set up his capital. There he was mocked with almost the same title, "Marquis of Peace," as had been bestowed on his murdered uncle and, like him, he had to perform the duties of cupbearer to the victor. But Imperial cupbearers had lost the charm of novelty. After one year the Hun ruler grew tired of his new one and added his scalp to that of his predecessor. In such bitterness of defeat and humiliation did Wu Ti's son and grandson pay for ancestral frivolities.

However, there was another descendant of Wu Ti's left, Ssü-ma Jui, who was less unlucky. When with the surrender of Ch'ang-an the dynasty broke down as a reigning power, he fled south and raised it up again at Kien Kiang (Nan-King), the breadth of the Yangtze between him and the horses of the Huns. This flight was not dictated by cowardice but by the sure instinct of self-preservation. For what the Chins were fighting was something elemental, something demoniac, which purely human strength could not resist. The time when this stupendous boiling over of the steppe might have been arrested or at least turned aside was past. The full wisdom of the energetic Han policy which projected massive breakwaters far out into that troubled nomad sea and the whole ineptitude of the Three Kingdoms' fratricidal warrings which allowed these breakwaters to drop out of repair, were now brought home with crushing convincingness to stampeding armies, to Emperors dragged off into captivity, to peasants slain under the burning roof-beams of their farms. However, the inadequacy of Chinese defence merely assisted, it did not originate the barbarian upheaval. The strength, the volume, the long continued rush through time and space of this human avalanche cannot be accounted for either by the merits or demerits of individuals or even of nations. It belongs to those occurrences which from unknown cosmic causes now and again sweep over mankind destroying and reshaping it. Frenzied and full of sting, like the swarming of a myriad hives, this great trek of nomad hordes arose towards the close of the third century near the north-western shores of the Pacific, flooded the Chinese Empire, carried away in its turbulent course Alans, Goths and Vandals, shook Western Rome to its foundations and spent itself at last, in the middle of the fifth century, in a final crash against Gothic valour and Gallic steel, only a few hundred miles away from the Atlantic sea-board. As none of these tribes had any writings or records, the proximate cause of their immense migration is as unknown as its remotest one. Perhaps terrific storms and frosts swept over their pasture grounds, rendering them uninhabitable even for their hardy stock. Or earthquakes made their familiar haunts seem cursed with the anger of a God. Or the pneumonic plague broke out among their trappers, wiped out whole clans, felled young men and old in such numbers, the few remaining healthy ones fled in wild panic and never dared return for fear of the reproachful ghosts of those thousands of unburied dead. Or maybe after days and nights of fasting a seer suddenly raised his emaciated form among them and with foaming lips and blood-shot eyes



urged them to trek to where the gold of wealthy cities waited for them and the fulfilment of their fate.

While the Ssü-ma princes were wasting their blood in fratricidal quarrels, two Tunguse brothers also started wrangling or rather their horses took to kicking and biting each other while grazing on the eastern banks of the Liao. Whereupon the eldest, who being a son of a concubine only ruled one horde, while the younger, Mu-jung Hui, lorded it over several, folded his tents and trekked west and west and yet further west, a distance of 2,000 miles, finally settling round the shores of Ku Ku nor. There on his death the eldest of his sixty sons successfully maintained one of those vigorous though but short-lived states into which spillings of the great migration began to crystallize within the zone of its conquests on the soil of old civilizations. A vastly more powerful one had been welded together about the same time on the banks of the Fen by the coalescence of scattered Hun tribes under a chieftain, Liu Yüan, remarkable as typical of the kind of ruler whom the materially and morally impoverished and consequently politically unstable conditions of the age carried up the steps of the Dragon Throne.

He bore the family name of the Hans Liu, claiming descent from one of those Chinese princesses given in marriage to Hun chieftains to tame enmity into friendship. He was, therefore, something of a half-caste by blood, and even more so by training, as he spent many years in the service of the Ssü-mas. The most capable of his sons, Liu Tsung, was brought up in the Lo yang of the Chin Emperor and had his nomad simplicity thickly coated with a varnish of Chinese book education. He kept his eyes wide open, noting the wealth of the Chin Court and the many weak spots in its defences, which made the transfer of that wealth into other hands a matter of intensely practical politics. The steps by which this transference was actually accomplished were taken in fairly swift succession.

In 304, on the lower Fen, Liu Yüan established not the mere bivouac of a nomad chieftain, but the residence of a King and of a King with no less a dynastic title than that of Han—still a name to conjure with among the northern tribes, however much it had lost its resonance among the sons of Han themselves. By its assumption he bade the world take notice that he, calling himself a Liu, was henceforth also to be considered the legitimate heir and successor of the Hans.

In 308 he proclaimed himself Emperor. To a certain extent he lived up to this position. The districts under his control enjoyed a better administration and a greater measure of

security than those fought over by the rival ambitions of the Ssü-mas were ever granted. Three years later he gave his best general, Shih Lo, one of those brilliant leaders in whom the fighting instincts of the steppe from time to time culminate to fullest expression, the significant title of a Bulwark of the Hans and Destroyer of the Chins, a third notification to the world that the Ssü-mas' hold of the Dragon Throne was being seriously challenged.

310 brought the voluntary adherence of a powerful Tungusic tribe marauding in north-eastern China—an increase of military strength which made the conquest of Lo yang possible the very next year. With the Chin Emperor their prisoner, it followed quite naturally that these half-caste Lius should now consider they had set up the Han Dynasty again by the decree of Heaven.

Liu Tsung, who after murdering his brother succeeded Liu Yüan, did actually hold under his direct sway all the northern provinces of China and most of the rest under the threat of his immense army constantly kept on a war footing. This was to prove the undoing of the barbarized Neo Han Empire. Only a ruler possessing an extraordinarily magnetic personality or high moral qualities could have kept these pugnacious hordes welded together as one disciplined whole for any length of time.



## CHAPTER X

### DIVISION BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

**B**UT Liu Tsung, dropping his Chinese veneer, soon degenerated into a drunken savage—and did nothing to foster that feeling of loyalty to himself and his house which alone could have ensured its fantastic fortune some measure of permanence. Almost immediately after his death, Shih Lo revolted with enough success to tear the Han Empire in two, the eastern half under his rule, the western one under that of Liu Yao, an orphan whom Liu Yüan had adopted, probably because he was amused by his white hair and red eyes, the boy being an albino. He became the only Liu surviving the scramble for the throne which broke out on Liu Tsung's death. He set up his residence at Ch'ang-an and called his Kingdom Chao. Shih Lo went one better and styled himself the Heavenly King of the Great Chao as a manifesto that he had no intention of resting content with only part of Liu Tsung's empire. He wanted the whole.

The resulting life and death struggle between him and Liu Yao produced much blood-letting among the Huns, renewed misery among the Chinese. The initial success of Liu Yao against Shih Lo's generals roused the fury of the old lion, brought him roaring out of his den to pounce on his enemy at Lo yang where victory was already being celebrated in copious bumpers of wine. Hopelessly drunk, Liu Yao reeled into battle, fell off his horse, and was taken prisoner, to be killed soon after. His son, who tried to continue the struggle, was slain also. This finally ended the half-caste Hans. Their rise and fall compressed within less than half the lifetime of one generation is typical of almost all the dynasties which the nomad flood was spawning multitudinously in this chaotic period on ancient Chinese soil. The dash of their cavalry could conquer vast districts, starve rich cities into surrender, and for a while keep the native population crouching hungry, frightened, broken-hearted among the ruins with which they scarred the whole radius of their power—but only for a while.

Even the hungry and the broken-hearted can bring forth sons who by the sheer strength of youth split the yoke of slavery. Further, scarcely any of those chieftains masquerading as Emperors developed the slightest capacity for administering their conquests in a way palatable either to the conquered or to their own people. There were brutes among them, who in their drunkenness, and they were more often drunk than sober, would condemn those they suspected of disloyalty to be disembowelled and to have their hearts torn out, others, who merely displeased them, to have their faces flayed and to dance and sing before them, the blood streaming down their lacerated cheeks ; who for their mad campaignings and vain-glorious palace constructions would oppress the conquered with such monstrous exactions that thousands hanged themselves to escape the beatings and other tortures with which any failure to pay the impossible was punished ; who to vary the bill of fare at their banquets, would have a young concubine beheaded, roasted and served to their guests, the uncooked head being handed round also to prove she had been pretty.

A successor of Shih Lo, Shih Hu, was in the habit of having his grown-up sons beaten so severely that two of them at different times plotted to murder their fond parent. Their plans miscarried—and not only they themselves but all their wives and children were killed, in the one case by decapitation, in the other by fire, Shih Hu gloating over the sight of their agony. One little grandson clung to his belt, piteously crying for mercy, but the belt broke and the executioners seized the child and pitched it into the flames to be burnt alive with his brothers, sisters and parents. The ashes were scattered round the gates and cross-roads of the city, so as to be trampled on by as many feet as possible.

Their treatment of the dead was on a level with their behaviour to the living. It would happen that the corpse of an enemy was disinterred, whipped, beheaded and flung into a stream. Exorbitant taxes and drastic game laws, which made the least attempt at poaching a crime punishable with death and turned large well-cultivated areas into hunting parks swarming with wolves and tigers, did not increase the popularity of the invaders. Nevertheless, the Chinese only turned on them once, indulging in a great massacre of their oppressors in 349, curiously enough under the direction of a Hun, Shih Minn, who pushed his way to the throne over the dead bodies of most of Shih Lo's descendants and needed native support against his compatriots. The reason why the people endured nomad misrule so long and so patiently was that their



poverty had become so extreme it stunned them into passive acceptance of any blows fate still chose to shower on their wellnigh broken backs. They were not its spoilt children. Fields lay fallow, towns in ruins, villages in squalid desolation.

When Ssü-ma Yen reunited the whole Empire in 280 he took a census of its population and found that it amounted to 13½ million able-bodied men, an enormous shrinkage from the 60 million of the great days of the Han. But now with the mad gallopings of the steppe trampling the cultivated plains of China, with all the burnings, battlings and blood-spillings which the birth, the maintenance and the destruction of the barbarian dynasties involved, besides the brigandage, the plagues and the famines following in the wake of all wars, there must have been a still greater decrease. Besides, one of these conquering chieftains compulsorily transferred 30,000 families of Chinese peasants to the banks of the Liao. That another established Tibetan hordes in the neighbourhood of Ch'ang-an, hardly made up for the loss. Nor was it much compensation that in between their military and plundering activities the nomad conquerors desirous of turning into settlers found time to order the construction of palaces gorgeous with sculptured walls, jade and pearl incrustated panels, silver columns, roofs of glazed and coloured tiles, strings of tinkling bells of gold. Generally they were built by forced labour and fell into ruins with the dynasty which had paraded its brief spell of power within them.

No less than sixteen of these bubbled up in the political cauldron, grew and glittered and broke and dispersed in the space of 135 years. Only one or two rise above the dead level of a crude and drunken despotism, like the Mu-jungs who began as Khans of Hsien pi tribes, ended as Kings of Yen controlling all the coasts of the Gulf of Pechili and if for nothing else, remarkable for their inches—some attaining a stature of eight feet; the Fus, of whom the two Fu Chiens, uncle and nephew, Great Khans and Sovereigns of Ch'in, showed some real organizing capacity and a gleam of understanding for the needs of their subjects. The features of the majority are lost in the dust of their endless campaignings. Nor is it possible to construct an accurate picture of the states they won and lost. Boundaries fluctuated with the speed of their horses' gallop, the reach of the flight of their arrows, and as rival dynasties often chose identical appellations, even the names of these Earlier and Later Chaos, these Northern and Southern Yen, these Former, Southern and Posterior Ch'ins reflect the chaos prevailing in that frightful period.

At its beginning it is known as the time of the Flowery Kingdom harassed by five aliens, at its close as the severance of North from South. It lasted practically from the first fall of the Western Chin in 311 to the rise of the Sui Dynasty in 589, over two centuries and a half. It was at its worst during the first hundred years, reaching the utmost abomination of desolation in 385, when a Mu-jung on the track of the last Fu Chien took forcible possession of Ch'ang-an, allowing his troops to loot and slaughter there to their hearts' content. The beginnings of restored confidence, the small accumulations of wealth, which Fu Chien's tolerable government had encouraged, were all beaten down again. With the increasing depopulation and terrorization of the enfeebled remnants of Chinese inhabitants, the survival of Chinese civilization north of the Yangtze began to appear impossible.

But at last fate which had frowned so long and so fiercely relented a little, shot a ray of light into the barbarian darkness. Watching events from a comparatively safe corner beyond the northernmost bend of the Yellow River, learning from the mistakes of all those horseback conquerors, who, building their thrones entirely on force and fear, found them perpetually crumbling to pieces, some Tungusic tribes who had trekked south from the marshy banks of Lake Baikal, and penetrated into China at the beginning of the century, fairly prosperous as the Kingdom of Tai, temporarily broken up by Fu Chien, reunited in 386 under the leadership of Toba Kuei, became the Kingdom of Wei. Steadily growing in size and with on the whole well-merited and well-maintained success, this Kingdom endured down to the sixth century, when autumn came upon it and that inner exhaustion which precedes and precipitates the fall of nations. It had fulfilled its mission, the salvage of the traditions of the ancient sages in northern China. It was the appreciation of their paramount value, their supreme efficiency as the driving and uniting forces of a state organism that enabled the Toba dynasty to lengthen the twenty years, which was the average life of the nomad states, into almost two hundred.

Already in 339 Toba Shih-i-Chien called in the aid of Chinese scholars to draw up a clear and equitable penal code. He wanted to call in the aid of Chinese architects also to build him a palace worthy of a family—dimly yet unmistakably sensing its predestination to the highest seat of power. However, his mother, who had never lived in anything but a tent, objected so strongly, he had to give up the idea. No doubt the old lady was right. At that time the Tobas were by no



means strong enough to stand the dangerous luxury of a palace. It would have cost them the mobility which proved such an asset in their fifty years' struggle with their rivals ; a mobility which carried them triumphantly through a 200 miles' dash into the desert to smite their most dreaded adversaries, the Jou Jans, swept them across the newly-frozen river in pursuit of other foes, spurred them up steep mountain crests in the dead of night, men and horses muzzled that no sound should betray their eagle swoop on the sleeping enemy. On that occasion they butchered 80,000 defenceless prisoners ; on a previous one an entire clan of Hun Lius, a total of 5,000 human beings. Fratricides, parricides and other varieties of murder also occurred among them with lamentable frequency. Of the nineteen sovereigns of their line, only four ended peacefully, that probably only because they died comparatively young. One royal prince had the pleasant habit of ambushing, beating and robbing harmless passers-by. To cool this predatory ardour, his father, Toba Kuei, had him suspended head foremost in a well till he was almost asphyxiated, then pulled up and plunged down again and again to the limit of his powers of endurance. Not exactly a Confucian method of inculcating filial piety. There was still too much of the wild nomad in their blood for their acceptance of K'ung Tzu's code of morality to be at first anything more than a political expedient. It was not meant to extend to the rectification of their own hearts. But even with that limitation it was of the utmost value, and in the course of a few generations produced rulers like Hsien Wen Ti and Hsiao Wên Ti, to whom the lofty ethics of the Confucians and the deep piety of the Law of Buddha were the guiding forces of their life, the controlling impulse of their actions and their thoughts. That their ancestor, Toba Kuei, began his Imperial régime by the adoption of the ceremonial, the music and the calendar of the great days of the Hans, that he built an altar to Heaven and a temple to his ancestors where the celebration of the solemn rites devised by the old sages broke in upon the brutalizing belief in physical force with visions of the Infinite and the Divine, cannot but have had a profoundly humanizing effect on the mind of his barbarians. The same ruler also saved a large number of ancient manuscripts from total destruction by ordering his governors to collect all the books they could and send them to his library at P'ing Ch'êng (Ta tung fu).

In a subsequent reign rich rewards were offered for rare books. Now a library implies librarians. After years of terrified flights from before barbarian arrows, and hidings away

from the grip of their tyranny in desolate mountain solitudes, the faithful heirs of the great scholars found a centre of study and of officially recognized and recompensed activity opened up to them in the very palace of the conqueror, from persecutor become a generous patron. And when Toba Kuei set up in the newly-conquered north-western districts an administration staffed exclusively by Confucian scholars, the way was paved for the re-entry of ethics and culture into public life. With far-reaching results. The chasm between victors and vanquished was bridged and a principle of mental discipline established singularly potent for shaping the state into an organism influenced by, but no longer vitally dependent on the personality of the ruler. Its pivot shifted from the capricious vacillations of the Court and the violence of the camps to the stable traditions of Temple, school and yamen. The casual agglomeration of conquests held together by the sword, was changed into a compact amalgamation welded together by an enlightened administration and a growing community of culture. Military arbitrariness was superseded by civilian rule according to law, precedent and the maxims of the Sages. Learning and the learned were no longer starved and scorned. Their usefulness was recognized, their importance acknowledged more and more. Soon the sons of nobles and officers were ordered to acquire learning and to attend the Imperial school. By 495 the capital boasted of one large and four smaller colleges.

A last ebullition of the old ignorant joy in destruction occurred in 446, just two years after the introduction of compulsory education for the ruling classes, clearly before the civilizing influence of that measure had had time to produce much effect. Buddhism, the rival and occasionally but by no means either necessarily or habitually the enemy of the native cults, was subjected to the fiercest persecution it had yet met with on Chinese soil. The alleged discovery of arms, a wine distillery and women in secret recesses of a Buddhist monastery in Ch'ang-an provided the pretext for an edict condemning all Buddhist monks to death, all Buddhist scriptures, statues and temples to annihilation. Further, anyone making human figures out of clay or copper was to be executed with his entire family—the juster law of the best Hans which exempted relations from punishment for the guilt of the individual having long been lost in the returning tide of barbarism. That tide, however, was now changing so rapidly from within, the spell of the sages fallen upon it was directing its aspiration so powerfully towards the old ideal of the Chün



tze, the ideal which made the greatness of the Hans, that within thirty years the law of mercy was revived and mass executions were disallowed. The following year even the slaughter of horses and cattle was forbidden. This prohibition, though, must be credited to Buddhism with the boundless universality of its charity and love.

Previously it had worked a still greater miracle and kept the Court of Wei sober for seven years. Needless to say this excess of virtue failed to maintain itself. In 465 the anti-alcoholic legislation was repealed. But such strenuous efforts towards reform show that Buddhism had obtained too strong a hold for governmental decrees against it, however violently worded, to be able to effect more than the martyrization of individual men and objects. Straightway after Toba Tao's murder, the persecution he had ordered was stopped. It had probably never been carried out seriously except immediately under his eye. His descendants went to the other extreme. His grandson Toba Chün shaved his head in token of submission to the law of Buddha; his great-grandson Toba Hung gave up the throne, retired to a monastery in the Imperial grounds, and dedicated himself wholly to the meditations and austerities prescribed to the Buddhist brotherhood, in this heir of savage invaders a wonderful sublimation of the lust for the conquest of all that is desirable into the aspiration towards the conquest of desire itself.

His predecessor, Toba Chün, also gave a practical demonstration of the futility of Toba Tao's edict against the making of images by casting a statue of Buddha so gigantic it absorbed 100,000 lb. of copper and 600 lb. of pure gold, probably the best use to which these metals have ever been put. Indeed they ministered to the needs of art and religion so abundantly that the less exalted demands of trade could no longer be fully satisfied. A matter of small moment: trade could never have accomplished that immense work of liberation, healing and pacification which the acceptance of Chinese classics and Indian sutras were now effecting. The former roused men's conscience, trained and fed their reason. The latter stimulated their imagination and filled the hunger of their hearts. Jointly they provided the subjects of the House of Toba with an impregnable refuge beyond the tyranny of wars and conquests, with a wonderful point of union between the pure wealth of their own past and the mysterious lure of distant skies high and safe beyond the miseries of to-day.

The range of spiritual possibilities thus opened up was so wide, that the creative impulse, paralysed for centuries, leapt

once more into jubilant life, dispersed the nightmare oppression of decay and ruins, which had weighed on the country so heavily and so long, rekindled millennial beliefs in mountain gods and water fairies, clothing them in the new radiance of Indian visions of the Divine. Stimulated by the stupendous revelation of the Buddhist Pantheon, deepened by the austere idealism of their own traditions and the long sorrow of their servitude, hallowed with virginal sensitiveness trembling at this first surrender of the soul of China to the message of a foreign voice, the races of northern China found in sculpture the perfect medium for expressing this wonderful fusion taking place within them of new illumination with solemn memories of long discovered and imperishable truths.

Borne towards them on the crest of an immense overflow of religious fervour, the tropical exuberance of its forms chastened by the grace and experienced certainty of Græco-Persian lines, Buddhist sculpture came to eyes and hands trained in the full-blooded vigour, the majestic dignity, the demoniac fierceness of the art of the Hans. That had achieved its greatest triumphs in architecture. Its statues, however, huge or numerous, were more in the nature of adjuncts to palaces and mausoleums than an aim in themselves. The art of the Weis reversed the relationship. Its architecture had merely to provide roofs for the colossal Buddhas and their train of devas, demons and disciples. Even that beautiful architectural innovation borrowed from India, the dagoba, was only an enormous casket for the keeping of Buddhist relics.

But sculpture grew singularly alert and diversified, ranging from slender statuettes a child could hold, to figures so vast they needed mountains for their shrine. A veritable passion for the moulding, carving and casting of images in clay, in stone, in bronze took possession of rulers and ruled. No Palace concubine could hope to be raised to the rank of Empress unless proficient in the art. Of course, æsthetic enjoyment was not the only motive for this rage. The inveterate desire for prying into the future had no small share in it. Before starting on any serious business, or nominating anyone to office it became the custom to cast images. Only if they turned out well, which signified luck and heavenly approval, would the undertaking be proceeded with or the appointment be made. Possibly Toba Tao's edict was primarily directed against this type of image-making, savouring as it did of witchcraft.

However, the main inspiration of Wei sculpture was purely religious. No lesser motive could have achieved that marvel-



lous creation of plastic loveliness which after the devoted toil of a hundred years carved an entire range of cliffs into one great poem on the glory of Buddha's multiple manifestations.

It was the second Wei Emperor, Toba Ssü, who about 414 started the Yün Kang cave Temples near his capital, P'ing Ch'êng. So admirably did this transfiguration of plain rock into the likeness of gigantic and beneficent Gods express the inmost longing of the time, that when in 494 Toba Hung moved the Imperial residence to Lo yang, rock temples were at once begun there also and on an even larger scale. They are the cathedrals of north-eastern Buddhism; like the cathedrals of mediaeval Europe, both a declaration of faith and an April blossoming of the creative instinct suddenly awaking after the long sterility of winter; like them also, the joint work of rich and poor, exalted and lowly. Emperors or very wealthy families would pay for the hewing out of the large figures, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on magnificent lotus-thrones, the gold of their aureoles lost in mysterious twilights, the blessedness of their smile, the sacredness of their infinite meditation drifting down to the worshippers from ineffable heights.

Poorer mortals would contribute the smaller images, carve beautiful little niches radiant with benign Gods of mercy bending forward to hear and to answer the fervent prayers of the humble and the grieved. A few remnants of savagery growled in obscure corners, in dim entrance porches, leapt up in flame-haired demons, in fiercely frowning sentinels armed to the teeth to smite down evil. But it wasn't to see these men walked the many weary miles from the capital to the great Caves. They came to burn their incense on the altar of the Golden Saviour from the West, the majesty of whose towering presence filled them with an overwhelming awe, an irresistible desire to follow the path he had trodden, the path of concentration on the spirit and renunciation of all worldly troubles and desires.

It was not quite the old path of the Sages, the Tao of the King, which K'ung Tzŭ had widened into the way of man, nor did it keep as free from illusions and exaggerations. But these were probably the means by which it reached the ears of the barbarians, and bent their energies from the foulness of blood-stained battle-fields, the brutality of the law of the survival of the strongest and the most unscrupulous to the serene peace of monasteries and the greatness of the law of the immortality of the holiest and the most unselfish.

By 512 there were over 13,000 Buddhist monasteries in the Wei Kingdom alone. Hundreds took the vows of monkhood

—some perhaps from a mere wish to escape the burdens of military service, taxes and forced labour which weighed heavily on the ordinary citizen; but by far the greatest number did so from a sincere conviction that the old life of unrestrained rapacity, of snarling self-assertion and debasing self-indulgence, far from securing happiness led into a torturing maze of disillusion and despair.

Toba Chün voluntarily turning away from the pomp of the palace to lead the ascetic life of an aspirant to saintship, and Toba Hung fasting for days during a great drought to appease the wrath of Heaven, at fifteen giving up hunting, of which he had been passionately fond, to devote himself wholly to study and the cares of government, spending nothing on the adornment of his palaces, a good deal on that of temples, setting an example of rigid simplicity in his dress and all personal requirements, ever anxious to spare the people even in enemy country, by keeping a sharp eye on the pilferings of officials and the looting propensities of soldiers, are two sovereigns, who by their far-reaching example of severe self-discipline, of uncompromising scorn of luxury and profound reverence for spiritual values, lit a great radiance above the mud and dust of the world and sowed some of the seed which in the fullness of time brought forth the glory of the T'angs.

And some was sown by the pilgrims, of whom there was a twofold stream, the one consisting of Indians and Bactrians moving from the West and the South to China, the other travelling from China to the holy land of Gotama Buddha. Both brought images and scriptures to feed the piety of the faithful in the Far East and to prevent their cult from slipping away from orthodox practice. Both were led by strong, courageous men whom the force of a profound conviction, an irresistible impulse to propagate of what was to them a great and joyful certainty, inspired to face gladly and fearlessly the many hardships and perils of immense journeys across precipitous mountain passes, brigand-infested highways, storm-swept seas, bone-strewn desert-tracks of whirling sands.

But they found some wonderful resting-places too, lofty temples, their beams, pillars, doors and windows magnificently carved and gilt, monasteries where "at the sound of a gong 3,000 priests would assemble in the refectory to eat silently and decorously with no clatter of bowls and shouting for more," cities where gorgeous processions of cars thirty feet high, bearing images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas, "fashioned in fold and silver," resplendent with jewelled crowns and aureoles, moved through the streets under streaming pennants, em-



broidered canopies, showers of fragrant blossoms and the azure spirals of frankincense burnt by royal worshippers.

The greater part of Central Asia had been wonderfully transformed. It lay under the spell of Buddha's law, which had endowed it with the threefold gift of a humane and genuinely civilized attitude towards life, of a fresh stimulus to art, an inexhaustible outlet for creative activity, and last but not least, an intercourse of helpful friendship with states and tribes extending from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, from the Yalu and the Yellow River to the Oxus and the Brahmaputra.

This intercourse was fairly continuous and frequent. It was started by the Indian pilgrims. One of the most important, Fo-t'u-ch'êng reached the Lo yang of the Western Chins in 310, not exactly a happy time in which to see it. The very next year the Huns entered the city, slaying every monk they caught. Luckily Fo-t'u-ch'êng fell in with one of the better Hun generals, on whom his powers of divination and second sight made such an impression, he recommended him to Shih Lo. Shih Lo honoured him in every way, housed him in his palace, allowed him to instruct his children, and never failed to consult him in serious matters. But what made Fo-t'u-ch'êng's stay in China so memorable was that his advice induced Shih Lo to allow his subjects, Chinese and Hun alike, to serve Buddha. This decree of tolerance published in 335 gave an immense impetus to monastic Buddhism hitherto limited to a handful of Indian and Bactrian fraternities.

The story of the official introduction of the Indian religion in A.D. 62 under Ming Ti, son and successor of Kuang Wu Ti, as the result of his dream of a great golden God floating into the Palace, is probably the later outcome of the desire to link up the advent of Buddhism with the great days of the Hans. These had no real need for it.

The star and death-enkindled worship of cosmic and ancestral spirits fully satisfied the people's hunger for the Eternal and Divine. But it was centred round the homestead, round the altars of the Harvests and the Grains, of the Rivers and the Hills. When hundreds of ancestral temples went up in flames, when thousands of orphans, homeless, nameless, altarless, were dragged away into slavery, when ruthless shiftings and destructions of populations tore the continuity of families and of all their wonted rites, then from out of the resulting agony and void an immense longing arose for a religion that would provide a home for the homeless, an assurance of heavenly protection to the lonely and the lost. In them the Indian missionaries found eager listeners. The message they brought

of Buddha's infinite mercy, of the futility of family ties and earthly property when compared to the salvation of the individual soul and the wealth of inner illumination, broke the prison-bars which held them captive in the darkness of the fetters and of the flesh.

Nevertheless, Buddhism in Northern China might have remained an obscure sect, only comforting the dispossessed, if Fo-t'u-ch'êng had not gained Shih Lo's favour. The times were still too troubled for anything to thrive without royal protection. With it the new religion made such strides that already in 399 Fa Hsien could open up the series of Chinese pilgrims who went on the arduous quest of the light of Buddha's laws. Absent fourteen years, he returned laden with sutras which he devoted the remainder of his life to translating into Chinese. This compelling the language of Han scholarship to render strange sounds and novel conceptions added considerably both to its vocabulary and its grammatical flexibility. Much diligent study was devoted to it, especially in the Chin Empire on the Yangtze where elegant essays, elaborate versification and exquisite calligraphy came prominently into fashion. The master calligraphist, Wang Hsi-chih, whose writing "moved forward like a floating cloud, backward like a startled snake," was born in 321.

The year 344 or 345 saw the birth of Ku K'ai-chih, the great painter, 365 that of T'ao Ch'ien, the great poet. That one century not only produced three such master minds but allowed them to develop all that was in them, providing them with intelligent patrons and admiring sympathizers, shows that the black horror of the reign of brutal selfishness was over, that the morning red of a new day of intellectual accomplishments was at last beginning to illuminate the sky. They were the heralds, largely even the creators of that wealth of poetry and painting, which rising in magnificent crescendos to the masterpieces of the T'ang poets and Sung painters filled nine centuries of Chinese life with a lyrical loveliness such as no other nation ever achieved.

The root of their inspiration was something more fundamental even than Taoism or Buddhism, namely the eternal wonder of the beauty of the world. Wang Hsi-chih and T'ao Ch'ien opened that long series of highly-gifted men to whom the love of nature was such an absorbing passion, it blotted out every other interest and all desire for wealth or social advancement. It made them content to live in humble cottages among peach-trees and plum-trees, "the windows stuffed with roots and ferns," "living on the lettuce grown in the garden, watching



the rain stealing up from the East," poring over ancient books and beautiful new writings, watching the passing of white clouds and the white mist in the valley and the blue haze round distant peaks, "tuning their spirit to the changes of the season and at a glance surveying the Universe." They were the monks of the great brotherhood of arts and letters and can still be seen in a thousand pictures wandering near foaming waterfalls, dreaming under lonely pines, singing to the soft chords of the lute in bamboo-groves lit by the moon. There can be no doubt they were affected by the world-alooofness preached by Buddhism and answering so well the needs of those difficult times it readily became one of the dominant thought currents of the day.

It was an attitude of mind which mellowed the Chün tze's lofty standards of conduct with an exquisite sensitiveness to every subtle beauty of mood and form and colour in the realm of nature. They did not dissect it with the eager curiosity of science; they watched it with the deeper insight of love, with the reverence of an unending admiration. It grew to be the holy book they studied most, however well they might be grounded in ancient Scriptures or newly translated Sutras. And what they read there could be expressed most fluently in painting and in poetry.

Therefore while the Weis were sculpturing their marvellous Buddhas in Northern China, Ku K'ai-chih was painting Buddhist saints and Taoist Immortals on the walls of the temples in Nanking. They were the main outlet of his piety, which did not go to the length of tempting him to withdraw from "the Murmur of the world's Dust." His talents, his success and his sense of humour rather led him to see that some of it was golden. He was in office when he died, about thirteen years before the downfall of the Chins.

This downfall was neither unexpected nor wholly undeserved, though the eleven inglorious Sovereigns with whom the Eastern Chin dynasty filled the Dragon Throne give the impression of being more sinned against than sinning. Never popular in the South they had from the first a hard task to maintain the Imperial power against that of the local nobles, not particularly pleased with the transference of the Son of Heaven's capital into such close proximity to their own sphere of influence.

In addition, the intractability of the Ssü-ma strain boiled over once more. Yüan Ti was still busy consolidating his position, when Ssü-ma Pao, a Chin prince, rose up in arms and tried to destroy it. He failed and was killed, but his bad example spread. In 322 Wang Tun, a cousin of the

Emperor's most trusted and powerful minister, Wang Tao, seriously threatened the new capital. He withdrew without having achieved more than sending the poor Emperor into an untimely grave through the burden of worries he had loaded unto his weary back.

Under the next ruler, Ming Ti, he renewed his attempt, but fell ill and died. With several beheadings of live men and dead this senseless revolt came to an end. Later rebellions, one of which succeeded in looting the palace, and holding the young Emperor virtually captive for several months, while a still more serious one temporarily raised its leader to the throne, all collapsed within a comparatively short time. For this reason: the Chins had the support of a number of able men inspired by an immense loyalty, not so much to the ruling dynasty, as to the idea it stood for, namely that of a mediator between Heaven and men, carrying out the Divine Will by means of the wisest and the best among his subjects. The administrative organization of the Hans, which best incorporated this idea, could only be kept going by a well-established dynasty. Though considerably battered by the horrors of civil wars and barbarian invasions it seemed to provide the only safeguard against their recurrence. Therefore both patriotism and the instinct of self-preservation rallied the majority to the party of loyalists, making it strong enough to maintain the Chins in power for over a century. It only gave way before the military prestige of Liu Yü, who having defeated piracy and destroyed two of the barbarian Kingdoms in the North, seemed to be the man chosen by Heaven for restoring the former unity, an aim which never ceased to enflame political ambition.

The Ssü-mas themselves grew tamer in the softer climate of the South. In 381 one of them, Hsiao Wu Ti, became a Buddhist, and filled the palace with monks. Family quarrels ceased—even about their most fruitful source, regencies and successions. Possibly the throne was no longer sufficiently attractive to be worth fighting for. Indeed it seems to have been peculiarly unhealthy. No less than five Chin Emperors died before thirty, the longest-lived reaching twenty-seven, the shortest-lived dying at nineteen. Another was deposed the moment he was twenty-nine, for which he probably was devoutly thankful, since it prolonged his life to forty-four, when he passed away as King of Hai Hsi. Yet another placed on the throne when he was fifty-one, died there in two years' time. The three who survived their thirtieth year were strangled. This seems to indicate that there was a group at



Court which had no use for a strong and experienced Emperor. The atmosphere there must have been one of brooding suspicion and extreme insincerity. No wonder the young boys supposed to be the masters because they wore gorgeous robes and everybody bowed to the dust before them, wilted away and never developed the stamina which might have burst the gilded bars of their cage. Sometimes even the gilding wore thin.

Between revolts, foreign wars and the reluctance of the taxes to flow in, the treasury often suffered from acute anæmia. The defence of bad frontiers also cost a great deal. That outlay, however, proved a sound investment, since it gave the Chinese a wide-awake army steadily gaining experience in fighting the barbarians. The flood of their victorious advance was still rising, though now and again signs would appear showing that the turn of the tide was no longer far off.

From 356 to 365 Lo yang was actually once more in the hands of the Chins and for nine years their ancestors enjoyed the comfort of repaired and well-kept graves. But then a Tunguse Mu-jung of the Kingdom of Yen snatched the city back and the Chins were again confined to the South. They were to be driven away even from this last refuge, at least so the Tangut Fu Chien, King of Ch'in, decided in 348. Having conquered and collected hundreds of clans, he felt sure he was the man predestined to reunite China. He laughed at those who tried to dissuade him from attacking the Empire, by pointing out the breadth and turbulence of the Yangtze. "If each of my 970,000 horsemen but drops his riding-whip into the River, it will dam it up and let them cross dry-shod." But not one of these 970,000 was ever to see the Yangtze at all. Near a much smaller river further North, the Fei, disaster overtook them.

The Chin army was splendidly handled, Fu Chien's immense host honeycombed with traitors. Its defeat degenerated into a rout, the rout into a frenzied panic. The moaning of the wind in the branches, the cry of birds among the reeds, mistaken for the war-whoop of pursuers, stampeded regiments of fleeing soldiers. They stumbled over and crushed each other, fell into canals and rivers, drowned in their agony to get away. Five hundred thousand human beings lost their lives, Fu Chien his chariot inlaid with mother-of-pearl, his robes, his weapons, shortly afterwards his state, his freedom and his life.

His ruin cleared the way for the Tobas, who were in due time to renew his attack on the Empire and with better success. But not under the Chins, whose victory on the Fei enabled

them to extend their northern frontiers. The western ones had already been pushed forward considerably in 347 by the conquest of the Kingdom of Cheng, a Kingdom which had adopted the principle of self-determination while the Chins were choking in the grip of the barbarians forty-four years before.

Unlike these Western Chins, the Eastern Chins did not perish through aggression from without. Calamities from within brought about their fall. The first and most critical began in 399 with an explosion of piratical raids on the maritime provinces, producing intolerable misery and its usual by-product—political restlessness. The instigator was a bold ruthless creature, Sun Ên, a descendant of the Suns who in the time of the Three Kingdoms had lorded it in those parts as full-blown sovereigns. He seems to have had visions of reviving these faded family glories, for he excited the people to slay the Imperial officials and to join his bands. These soon amounted to several thousands. He called them the Immortals—fiends would have been more accurate. The magistrates they seized were chopped up, pickled and served to their relatives. If these refused to partake of this ghastly meal, they also were turned into mincemeat. Towns and villages were looted and burnt, trees cut down, wells filled up.

At the head of 1,000 war junks Sun Ên even proceeded up the Yangtze and threatened the capital. As his top-heavy craft could only proceed slowly up-stream the government had time to organize the defence. He was driven back. A year later his fleet was destroyed and he and the thousands of prisoners on board drowned and were no more. But the evil that he did survived him. As a result of his depredations, a terrible famine broke out in the maritime provinces, devoured one-half of the population and left the other weak and sick, a ready prey to every germ of rebellion and disease. The government had already lost prestige by its inefficient handling of Sun Ên's lawlessness. Indeed it was the grave discontent caused by a Ssü-ma governor's tyranny that first gave the pirate his chance. Rebellion was in the air.

Huan Hsüan, a son of the Huan Wên who as an enterprising and frequently victorious general, as Prime Minister and Regent had virtually ruled the Empire for several years, now considered the moment favourable for putting the finishing touch to the greatness of the family's fortunes begun by his father. In 403 he removed An Ti from the throne and sat down on it himself—but even as he prepared to mount it some steps collapsed—an evil omen, soon to be verified.



The deposed Emperor himself seems to have been fairly resigned in his helplessness, but there were governors and generals who would only obey the legitimate line or else start a new one of their own. Among these Liu Yü soon took the lead. Though born in extreme poverty he claimed descent from a brother of Liu Pang and he certainly possessed a good deal of the military and diplomatic skill of that master-builder. Indeed, though the mausoleums of the Hans had been levelled to the ground, their spirit was abroad once more, scattering dreams for the restoration of the united Empire they had ruled. Impelled by these, Liu Yü threw himself heart and soul into a military career and won his spurs by inflicting repeated defeats on Sun Ên. Though at first on good terms with Huan Hsüan he soon realized his best game was the backing of legitimacy against usurpation. He therefore stirred up rebellion against the rebel.

By 404 Huan Hsüan's head was dismally rotting in the city where he had played the Emperor, and the genuine one, An Ti, probably not a little flustered after his year's eclipse, climbed back to the throne. Having heard the story of the collapsing steps he no doubt realized that it behoved him to sit very still, lest he bring the whole ramshackle structure crashing to pieces under him. Nor was Liu Yü, who had put him back there, minded to depend on Imperial gratitude for promotion. He would win it by the strength of his own right arm. Aware that Huan Hsüan had failed from lack of hold on the public imagination, he aimed steadily at what would impress it most—military glory. Victorious expeditions against the hated barbarians would give him this, as well as the control of war-seasoned forces and ample funds out of the proceeds of the loot.

Therefore in 409 he attacked the Tunguse Mu-jung's Kingdom of Nan Yen, and in a lightning campaign of a few months wiped it out of existence; with yet greater speed though he had to hurry back to put down serious disorders which had broken out in his own country. The anti-dynastic cry put forward by the leaders was a threadbare excuse; the real motive, as in most factious opposition, being shameless lust of plunder. However, it had been worked up into a serious fighting force, as Liu Yü soon discovered. It took a year of battles, sieges, flights, pursuits, attacks by land and water with sharp-shooters and flaming arrows, before the trouble ended in the death self-inflicted or otherwise of its instigators.

Poor An Ti had no doubt held his breath while all this row was going on round his rickety throne, and he may have heaved

a sigh of relief when the man who had rescued him a second time, but who was a very whirlwind of restless energy, decided to carry this energy north again in a renewed effort to make the dead Han Empire once more a live reality. Hence his first objective was the reconquest of its two ancient capitals.

In 417 he declared war on their present owners, the Latter Ch'ins ruled by the Tibetan family Yao, one of the many who had waxed fat on the downfall of Fu Chien. A fairly recent event, their state was new and poorly organized. Joint attacks by war junks and war chariots and generous treatment of the native population speedily brought it to the ground.

The King, Yao Hung, who surrendered, was sent South and publicly beheaded for the city mob to gloat over the death-throes of an unhappy foe. Liu Yü went South too, a hero resplendent in the glory he had desired so much. The Emperor loaded him with honours and created him Prince of Sung, whether out of gratitude or fear—who can say? In the light of subsequent events it seems fairly certain that Liu Yü was even then seriously contemplating the foundation of a new dynasty.

He left the newly-conquered territory in charge of his son, Liu I-cheng, an inexperienced youth, with nothing to recommend him except his blood. Evidently his father, in view of his disloyal schemes, dared not confide his conquests to an able general, who might feel tempted to throw his weight in on the side of legitimacy, as he had done himself once. His son seemed safer. He had not reckoned with his stupidity. In a few weeks he got himself so hated both by the native population and his own men, that there was nothing left for him to do but to bolt the moment the Huns of the Kingdom of Hia began to threaten Ch'ang-an seriously. They had been gleefully watching the destruction of their rivals the Yaos, confident it would sooner or later give them the opportunity of slipping into the territory they had compulsorily vacated.

Liu Yü had sought to guard against this danger by swearing a friendship which was to last till crows turn white, the mountains level, seas dry, with Hu lien Puo puo, King of Hia. But the latter believed he had only sworn friendship to Liu Yü's face, not to his back. No sooner was that turned, than with swarms of horses and men he crept closer and closer round Ch'ang-an. Terrified, Liu I-cheng plundered the city, packed the loot on to a long string of carts and started on his south-eastern flight—no, not flight, a crawl at the rate of a bare ten miles a day. The Huns soon caught them up, annihilated the rearguard, pounced down on that lumbering convoy



and annihilated it also. The loot they seized—of the dead looters they made a great pyramid of bones. Liu I-cheng escaped, but must have had an unpleasant half-hour when he met his father. The newly reconquered Han capitals were lost again for good. Probably to forestall the blighting effect the news of this disaster would have on his military fame, Liu Yü now proceeded rapidly with his plans.

To accelerate the fulfilment of a prophecy which gave the Chins two more sovereigns, including An Ti, without much ado he had the latter sent off to join his forefathers and replaced him by his brother Ssü-ma Tê-wên, known as Kung Ti. He was a Buddhist and would have been quite content to end his days in the safe insignificance of a duke of consolidated Peace or some such title customary for the dethroned. But Liu Yü, dreading the fate of Huan Hsüan, believed the existence, however obscure, of any member of the legitimate line might sooner or later tempt some ambitious general to revolt against him under cover of fighting an usurper.

Within two years of Kung Ti's abdication he ordered him to swallow poison, which the ex-Emperor, unwilling to stain his soul with the crime of self-destruction, courageously refused to do. So he, too, was choked to death, and the blood of the Ssü-mas, once so wild and irascible, latterly so weak and weary, ceased to throb in the current of great events. The milestone they had set up in 265 to mark a return to unity, was knocked down, because they were unable to maintain that unity, and the old Liu blood arose and drew public favour away from them unto itself by a clear promise to succeed where they had failed.

The direction and justification of the Sung dynasty milestone which Liu Yü erected on the ruins of that of the Chins was the reconquest of the provinces lost to nomad invaders. A vast enterprise, but he started it so well, he had ground for optimism about the future, and could close his eyes in peace after two years of enjoyment of the sweets of supreme power. He had enlarged the borders of the Empire, his military renown held the barbarians in terrified awe, collected tribute even from the Weis; he had able-bodied sons and left them an efficient army. But whether from pressure of adverse outer circumstances or from some inner weakness, Liu Yü's brilliant beginning was not maintained. Several of his descendants, thrown off their balance by too swift a rise to power, developed an insolence, an impatience of control, a viciousness and vulgarity of behaviour which gave great offence to the generals and ministers on whose whole-hearted support the security of the dynasty depended. His very first successor, his son

Liu I-fu, displeased the greybeards at Court so much by his lack of decorum during the period of mourning, that they dethroned, murdered and supplanted him by his brother Liu I-lung, two years his junior.

A great-grandson of Liu Yü's, Liu Yeh, who came to the throne at sixteen, sowed his wild oats so recklessly and gave his animal spirits, his love of practical jokes such license, in less than a year he degenerated into a cruel tyrant and was slain by one of his father's officers as one would kill a mad dog.

Another great-grandson, Liu Yü, roused the unforgiving ire of one of the most powerful men at Court, Hsiao Tao-ch'êng, by an act of outrageous effrontery. Finding him resting in his camp during the heat of summer noon in the complete lack of costume suitable to the temperature, he had him pulled off the couch, painted a target on his belly and shot at it with arrows, roaring with laughter when he hit the bull's-eye. The arrows were blunt, but Hsiao Tao-ch'êng, fearing they might be sharp next time the Imperial scapegrace took it into his head to try target practice on elderly generals, got him quietly murdered and replaced by his stepbrother, Liu Chun, a gentle child of thirteen—temporarily replaced—merely for the length of time needed to mature his scheme of superseding these crazy Sung by his own professedly wiser and worthier family.

The worst of Liu Yü's progeny was his grandson, Liu Chao, considered semi-mad from childhood, yet allowed to follow his low tastes at will. The new-fledged Court of the Sung seems to have been singularly lacking in dignity and discipline, possibly because the older Empresses were not given any authority whatsoever, and soldiers had more to say there than civilians.

Liu Chao, idle and dissolute, made himself popular with his father's the Emperor Wên's bodyguards by standing them drinks and joking with them in a familiar way. Reproved and threatened with degradation, he murdered his father in the dead of night with his own hands, and sat down on the throne so brutally emptied. But a parricide installed as a Son of Heaven was too flagrant a contradiction in terms.

The capital at first was stunned and overawed, but the military establishments of the provinces rose in genuine indignation. Fortunately for the dynasty the absence of a general of sufficient weight to be acclaimed Emperor coincided with the presence of an intelligent and highly acceptable Liu, Liu Chun, third son of the murdered Emperor.

Within ten days an army of divinely guided soldiers marched in his name and that of righteousness against the assassin.



Deserted by everybody, Liu Chao jumped into a well, but was dragged out alive, only to be decapitated with his four sons. Their naked and headless corpses were exposed in the market-place, spat on and jeered at by the populace.

The new Emperor, Hsiao Wu Ti, had to do a little more spilling of Liu blood before he could feel safe on the throne. For eleven years quite a capable and energetic ruler, he ended as a miser and a drunkard and seems to have sadly neglected the education of his son, the Liu Yeh of evil renown. Possibly, though, the pull towards evil was so strong in that family, no amount of care would have made much difference.

If Liu Yeh was bad, his uncle, the fat uncle whom he nicknamed The Pig and forced to wallow in mud and pick up his food out of it so as to live up to that endearing appellation, was even worse. He had not the excuse of youth for his profligacies and cruelties. Cold-bloodedly, mainly by poison, he got rid of a wife, a brother-in-law, three brothers, twenty-eight nephews and all and sundry whom his suspicious nature caused him to fear. Yet he favoured the new creed, and spent large sums of money, not his own, on building a magnificent pagoda.

Wên Ti, on the contrary, leaning more to the old state religion, had tried to keep the spread of Buddhism within bounds. In 435 he prohibited the casting of images and the building of monasteries and temples except by official licence. Hsiao Wu Ti went further. A Buddhist monk having been convicted of conspiracy, a sharp inquiry was set on foot into the lives of all monks. Those failing to keep their vows were put to death. An old edict compelling them to perform the prostrations obligatory at Court and which they wished to reserve solely for the Divinity was revived. Nuns were forbidden access to the ladies of the Palace.

These measures were promulgated between 458 and 462. Taken in conjunction with Toba Tao's repressive edicts in 446, it seems clear that the monks had grown so numerous and self-assertive, they provoked the emergence of an anti-Buddhist party, which though soon defeated at the Court of the Weis, maintained itself for some time at the Chinese Court of the Sung.

Possibly as a make-weight to the teaching of the foreign missionaries, Wên Ti encouraged the study of Chinese literature, both sacred and secular, classified under four headings, metaphysics, history, letters, ethics. In 442 he ordered the school and the temple near K'ung Tzŭ's grave in Shantung to be repaired and appointed five families as caretakers. But the

whole province was lost to the Weis under Ming Ti the Obese, and the Emperor was left without a temple in which to venerate its great Sage till 505, when the founder of the Liang dynasty built one in Nanking.

The same Emperor also took an active interest in the schools both provincial and metropolitan where K'ung Tzū's doctrines were taught and made it compulsory for Imperial princes and sons of nobles to attend them. That there should have been any necessity for such a decree shows how much higher education had dropped out of fashion among the ruling classes, which would account for the appearance of such lamentable representatives of the human species as disgraced the records of the Sung. Indeed it is explicitly stated that the schools extant under them and the Chins were badly managed and poorly attended. One of the reasons for this may have been the lack of funds due to their being drained away for the building of Buddhist temples and the maintenance of Buddhist monks. Also Liu Yü's dream of a reunited China, which shook the north with the tramp of his victorious armies, had to be paid for by his weaker descendants with the nightmare of repeated invasions of their own territory.

Liu Yü had not been dead a year, before the Lo yang he had conquered with such shouts of triumph, fell into the hands of the newly-consolidated northern power, the Wei Tobas. In 450 their army encamped opposite the Sung capital, Chien K'ang, and with brandished sword offered peace and an alliance to be cemented by two royal marriages. But Wên Ti refused the offer, ill-advisedly, as friendship between the two states would have benefited both and spared their subjects untold suffering.

The war-party having carried the day could triumphantly point to the departure of the Weis who, short of provisions, uninured to the damp warmth of the Yangtze valley, struck camp and slowly returned north. But their line of retreat was one dreadful trail of pillage and destruction, and when the Sung warriors, further emboldened by the murder of Toba Tao the very next year, invaded his territory and besieged a frontier fortress, they were beaten and slain in such numbers, what was left of them hastened South again at top speed. While bandaging their wounds they may have reflected that, after all, the Weis might be pleasanter as friends than as enemies. Their power was constantly growing and it was they, the once illiterate barbarians, not the increasingly unworthy Chinese Lius, who revived the great Han traditions.

They shielded the cultivated land from nomad raiders with



as much energy as the best Han generals, plunging into the steppe on bold punitive expeditions, fighting behind zaribas of willows drenched with water and frozen in the biting wind into a solid wall of ice. They repaired and prolonged the Great Wall which had given way under the appalling pressure of the nomad flood during the two preceding centuries. They reconstructed and re-annexed the chain of forts and tributary states with which the Hans had kept the caravan trails open to the West.

Modern historians think of these chiefly as trade-routes; the Tobas, unafflicted by the obsession of commercial interests, viewed them more as pilgrim paths along which Buddha's message of salvation moved towards them, illuminating their life with new hopes and deeper insight. Not that they closed themselves to enlightenment nearer to hand. In their great awakening from the impulsive existence of barbarians to the thought-controlled life of the cultured, the strength, the sanity and the moral elevation of ancient Chinese wisdom impressed them profoundly. When K'ung Tzŭ's grave passed into their possession, their first care was to see to the adornment and upkeep of his memorial Temple. They put up additional tablets, created his lineal descendant "Marquis Venerating the Sage," and bestowed the title of "Chung Sheng Kung," "Worshipful Sage Duke," on K'ung Tzŭ's shade.

Altogether they administered China's vast fund of spiritual values far better than the Lius who boasted that the blood of the Hans flowed in their veins. But then the Tobas claimed still nobler lineage, calling no less a hero than Huang Ti their ancestor; no doubt mere pious fiction, Huang Ti himself only being admitted into sober history on sufferance, but it goes to prove an admitted affinity between the Weis and the Chinese. Whether such affinity was racial as well as mental did not affect the main point—their capacity of transmitting the great heritage of the Chinese past to future generations.

In 496 they took the important step of moving their capital from P'ing Ch'êng, which still looked towards the north-western wilds from which they had sprung, to Lo yang, the city which for all the storms that had swept over it, stood on ground saturated with the civilization of the Chous and the Hans. The Weis adopted this civilization with all the fervour of converts, and changed their name from the Tungusic Toba to the Chinese Yüan, signifying origin.

Twenty years earlier, about the date when away in the West the Roman Empire was crumbling to pieces beneath the pressure of blue-eyed barbarians, southern China had changed

both the name and the family of its rulers. But the change involved no putting up of a new milestone, only the writing of the name Hsiao Ch'i beneath that of Liu Sung on the space the latter had left singularly empty of anything worth recording. There was no mending or altering of ways ; just a melancholy repetition of the unscrupulous manoeuvres which had replaced the Ssü-mas, grown too weak by a general grown too strong. Hsiao Tao-ch'êng, like Liu Yü, stood for the Han tradition, claiming descent from Hsiao Ho, the right-hand man of Liu Pang. Like him, he was accepted by the nation chiefly on the strength of his military reputation, won in the perennial struggle between North and South ; like him, he only reigned a short time and still like him he was too unlucky in his descendants to found a long-lived dynasty.

Four out of the seven rulers hurried on and off the throne in the short space of twenty-three years, ended by violence. The last but one branded with the contemptuous label of "idiot eastern Marquis," hated seriousness and study, killed his tutors who attempted to remonstrate with him and gave himself up whole-heartedly to every conceivable vice, cruelty and tyranny, those leper spots always appearing when power begins to poison the blood of rulers. He had only reigned two years when Hsiao Yen, a distant cousin, rose up in arms against him, to avenge his elder brother Hsiao J, whom the foolish young Emperor had put to death on the strength of baseless calumnies. He had thereby deprived himself of his wisest and most loyal councillor, handed the Court over to the unchecked control of the corrupt elements male and female who flattered and fattened on his worst instincts.

Among the female favourites one concubine, P'an Fei, achieved immortal fame as the Lady of the Lily feet. They were so fairy light and tiny and shod in such dainty shoes, a flower embossed on each little sole, her every step scattered lilies on the ground. It is also said that the practice of artificially reducing women's feet arose from the desire to emulate the minute proportions she had achieved. She was besides so radiantly beautiful Hsiao Yen would have taken her into his harem, if conscience in the shape of a stern minister had not warned him that for the founder of a new dynasty as he already schemed to be, female beauty is the most dangerous snare. So poor little golden Lily-feet had to die—which seems rather an excess of virtue. But then Hsiao Yen was nothing if not excessive : a large passionate nature, with the dominating passion always athirst for the power needed to materialize his wealth of ideas. Nor was this ambition ever sullied by secret



hopes of self-indulgence; it rather crystallized into fervent aspiration towards a fuller understanding of the riddle of existence, towards mastery of its manifold workings.

The tragic death of his brother had set his soul on fire with indignation at a government which could slay the just at will without the shadow of a reason or even the pretence of a trial. He was then a man of forty-eight, studious, austere, concentrated, with a thinker's vision of the Infinite in Time and Space, a leader's grasp of the immediately essential, a poet's sensitiveness to the beauty and the sadness of the world.

The Emperor who had killed his brother was a vicious youth of eighteen, immature in everything except the gratification of his grossest appetites. Seeing which, a brother of his, Hsiao-Pao-jung, age fifteen, thought he would cut a better figure on the throne, set troops in motion at Chiang ling on the Yangtze and moved down-stream towards the capital. Hsiao Yen at first supported his claims, scattered the Imperial troops sent against him and after a strenuous siege, during which 80,000 inhabitants died of sickness, seized the important city of Ping Cheng.

Two months later, master of the fortress guarding the approach to the capital, he started strangling the latter into surrender by a close blockade.

Previous revolts having been put down with ease, the young Emperor relied on the same luck this time and calmly continued sleeping in the daytime, feasting at night and watching the dainty little feet of P'an Fei making lilies grow on the gold-leaf-strewn floor of his luxurious palace. This may have been amusing for him, but proved so maddening to his officers, they decided to make friends with the rising power of Hsiao Yen by presenting him with the gift they knew would please him most—their young master's brainless head. He was unsuspectingly playing the flute when they fell upon him, chopped it off—and sent it to the rebel camp preserved in wax.

Hsiao Yen, looking on it with more contempt than pity, dubbed its dead owner East Marquis of Stupidity and placed Hsiao-Pao-jung on the empty throne. Not for his benefit though, merely as a stop-gap during the time still required to make his own position there impregnable. Hence nothing is recorded of this twelve weeks' reign beyond the death, not by natural causes, of six of Hsiao-Pao-jung's brothers and Hsiao Yen's promotions from Grand Marshal to Chancellor, from Duke to King of Liang.

In a vain hope of saving his life, the nominal ruler sent in his abdication to the real one, who graciously accepting it, pro-

claimed himself first Emperor of the Liang dynasty. The ex-Emperor, then barely sixteen, was allowed to drink himself into unconsciousness, in which condition he was sent off to join the shades of his ancestors at the Yellow Springs and tell them that the dynasty they had founded in bloodshed had ended in the same miserable way.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE BUDDHISM OF LIANG WU TI AND OF THE WEI EMPRESS HU

**A**S far as the reigning family and the radius of its political power were concerned the new dynasty was merely a continuation of the old, but in its spirit it represented a momentous change, nothing less than the reintroduction of the ideal into everyday life. Not so much the stern old Han ideal of the Chün tze, though that was still potent as an unforgettable memory and the sacred books which set it forth were strengthened in their old position of the corner-stone of education. Nevertheless, they had unmistakably dropped into the rôle of the customary, the expected, almost the stale. The new, the stimulating—the attractive was represented by Buddhism. It was Buddha's ideal of boundless compassion, Buddha's teaching of the value because of the potential holiness of each individual existence, on a background of supreme indifference to its outward experiences and social ties, and above all the Buddhist monks' ideal of renunciation and contemplative seclusion—backed by the assurance of some region of incomparable bliss—which sounded a note of hope and joy bound to have the widest resonance in a world oppressed by a thousand tyrannies, hollowed out by the hunger of two centuries for justice, freedom, peace.

There were besides the artist's ideals of music and poetry so much in favour at the Court of the Eastern Chin which Hsiao Yen, himself a poet, brought into fashion again.

On Jade Terraces by moonlight, under rustling bamboos and soaring pines, many graceful verses were composed. His eldest son, Hsiao T'ung, inherited his father's literary gifts, surrounded himself with men of learning, and was the first to gather selected specimens of prose and poetry by various authors and on diverse subjects together in one great collection under the title, "Wen Hsüan," Choice Literature. Though the great T'ang poets looked down on this anthology as lacking in taste, it represents a notable achievement in an age which was groping its way out

of a morass of ignorance and brutality towards scattered points of light not yet united into one perfect beam.

Hsiao T'ung can also claim the yet greater merit of being the first notable representative of the new conception of what a man should be, a conception which to the old discipline of righteousness and reverence added Buddha's compassion and gentleness. Like his father, he made a definite stand against the voluptuousness and cruelty of the former Court. He found his pleasure in collecting beautiful books, not beautiful women, and would stint himself in food and clothes for the sake of the poor. It was an immense misfortune for the dynasty that he died eleven years before his father. None of his brothers came up to him.

The first, Hsiao Kang, created Prince Imperial after Hsiao T'ung's death, showed no capacity to dominate the flood of misfortune which engulfed the last year of his father's reign and made his own an eighteen months' trembling expectation of a dreadful end.

The other, who at least temporarily saved the Dragon Throne for the dynasty, Hsiao I, known in history as Yüan Ti, shared his brother's literary tastes and was like him a great collector of books and a skilful versifier. But rivals for supreme power, however closely related to him, he not merely killed, which in the prevailing standard of morality was almost inevitable, but he went out of his way to make their death as painful as possible. Thus he let the three young sons of his dead and defeated cousin, whose only crime was their proximity to the line of succession, agonize in prison for twelve days before they perished of starvation. Possibly this superfluity of cruelty was a conscious reaction against his father's horror of inflicting pain—a horror the majority jeered at as excessive.

Many a ruler has been hurled from power on account of the superabundance of his iniquities. Liang Wu Ti died in grief and impotence because of the excess of his virtues, because he endeavoured to lead his people up heights too lofty for their clay-bound feet. He failed to make a lasting impression on his time not from lack of opportunity and effort, simply because he was a full 2,000 years ahead of it.

The gap between him and his subjects only opened in the second and longer part of his reign—in 517, when he embodied the Buddhist prohibition against the taking of life into laws binding on all. He forbade animals to be immolated. Henceforth only imitations in pastry were to be offered up to the Gods and the ancestral Spirits. He also prohibited the weaving of representations of immortals, men and animals into cloth or



silk, on the ground that the cutting of such material encouraged the habit of injuring sentient beings. These enactments caused intense discontent. Not that sensitiveness to the sufferings of animals was anything startlingly new—instances of it are recorded by Mêng Tzŭ in the fourth century B.C., and previous to that, T'ang, the founder of the Shang dynasty, had introduced some idea of fair play and humaneness into his game laws. But Liang Wu Ti's generation, far from having made any ethical progress, moved on a considerably lower moral plane than their great forefathers, owing to the innumerable wars which the irruption of the barbarians had brought in their train—the big wars between North and South, Chinese and Nomad, and the small wars between rival lords, rebels and loyalists, brigands and peasants, rising and decaying dynasties.

Hsiao Yen had fought many of these wars himself. In the very first year of his reign the Hsüan Wu Ti of the Northern Wei attacked him, ostensibly moved by the entreaties of the last Ch'i prince who had fled to his Court and through sunshine and rain stood weeping at the Palace Gate crying aloud for vengeance against the usurper of his brother's throne. Armies marched, harvests were trampled down, villages burnt, cities besieged. One was taken by the Wei—and kept by them. Three years later they were again on the war-path, snatching further territory from the southern Empire. But in 507, in a great land and river battle, they suffered a serious defeat. One hundred thousand of their soldiers were slain, 100,000 drowned, 50,000 taken prisoner, an experience which made the war-path lose its attractiveness for several years. Also in 516 the energetic Hsüan Wu Ti died, taking with him into the grave the luck and the greatness of the Wei.

He left the throne to his son Yüan I, a child of five.

The mother, the concubine Hu, henceforth proudly lording it as Dowager-Empress, promptly seized the regency. This meant a complete departure from the usual Toba custom, according to which, as was done by the great Han Wu Ti, the mother of the heir to the throne was compelled discreetly to remove herself to a higher sphere, in order to avoid all possibility of her ever meddling with the affairs of this lower one. It was a great loss of face to the advocates of humaneness and women's rights, that their first triumph proved the undoing of the Tobas, or Yüans as they called themselves at that time.

The Empress Hu's love of power was nowise justified by any capacity for its proper exercise. Daring where she should have been discreet, sentimental where she should have been firm, she lacked the tact and self-discipline needed for the task she had so

light-heartedly undertaken. Of course the keeping those full-blooded Tunguse nobles and princes idling round the Court in order and preventing the awakening self-assertiveness of the Chinese masses from drifting into rebellion may have been a problem the ablest ruler would have found hard to solve. Indeed, feeling her own strength insufficient, the Empress Hu did call some royal princes to her aid. But as she mixed up love affairs with state business she only envenomed instead of moderating the factious rivalries always besetting a minority.

Once they got the better of her, and for five years, from 520 to 525, she was virtually a prisoner in the North Palace, while her enemies carried on the government in the name of her little son. Fortunately for her they carried it on so badly, that when she got the chance of escaping, she met no serious opposition to her reassumption of power. Then, as before, she did an immense amount for the Buddhist monks, either from purely religious devotion or with a hope they would do something for her in return, both by attracting the magic power believed to dwell in relics, prayers and images to her side and by diverting the attention of the oppressed from their present misery to a beautiful heaven beyond this earth and filling their eyes and minds with the strangely satisfying excitement of gorgeous processions and wonder-working pilgrimages.

In the South her contemporary, Liang Wu Ti, tried the same experiment and attempted to make the Buddhist Church the main pillar of his throne. While she built the Monastery of Eternal Peace close to her Palace and a pagoda nearly 1,000 feet high, he erected one of twelve stories and himself held public dissertations on the Buddhist Scriptures there ; while she turned thousands of workmen into the caves near Lo yang to hew prophets, Gods and angels out of the hard rock, he tried to carve the precepts of Buddha into what is harder still, the human heart.

While she dispatched Sung Yüan to India to collect Buddhist writings, he summoned the founder of the Zen school of Buddhism, the famous patriarch, Bodhidharma, freshly landed in Canton, to visit him in his capital.

No doubt he listened with rapt attention to the exposition of his doctrine which denied the value of works, even that of holy writ, contending that true illumination can only be obtained by one's own effort and within one's own heart. The Emperor, who took great pride in his pagodas and temples, his crowds of monks and piles of books and who shared the popular belief in the efficacy of relics, does not seem to have appreciated the new teaching as much as Bodhidharma had expected.



At least he did not stay long in Chien Kang. Hoping for more understanding elsewhere, he crossed the Yangtze, according to a legend immortalized in countless pictures, on a mere reed, as he had attained complete independence from the physical laws governing ordinary mortals. Lo yang was his goal.

He must have arrived at the time when the power of the Dowager-Empress was severely eclipsed. But the power of Buddhism over the public imagination was by no means shaken, and the Indian patriarch, sitting day in day out, rapt in profound meditation, his large dark eyes fixed on a wall which to his gaze had probably grown a transparent mirror of beatific visions, was soon worshipped as a saint, to the great annoyance of those monks who derived considerable worldly profit from the faith in external works which this unpleasant throw-back to the original inwardness of their religion was trying to discredit. Five times they sought to poison him, then the readiest method of silencing the inconveniently virtuous. But for once godliness prevailed over iniquity and Bodhidharma continued to gaze at his wall, till the peaceful death of old age ended or at least seemed to end his nine years' meditation.

Even before he passed away events occurred at Lo yang proving the truth of his doctrine of the futility of wholly externalized piety.

Notwithstanding all her ardour for Buddhist images, books and temples, the Empress-Dowager Hu understood Buddha's message so little she calmly poisoned her own son at the first sign of his wishing to emancipate himself from her regency.

To prolong it indefinitely she placed a child of three, Chao Lin-t'ao, on the throne, the throne which the Tobas had filled so well for 140 years, but which was now shaking to its very base. She herself with her unspiritual faith in outward works had undermined it.

To obtain the enormous sums she lavished on the building and decorating of Buddhist Temples, she had cut down the salaries of officials—an insane act which sowed bewilderment and discontent in the ranks of the very class whose support she needed most. A spirit of scorn and hatred for her government spread from them to entire provinces. North and West rebellions blazed up, not to be put down without severe fighting, and fighting, as in the black days during the ruin of the Hans, inevitably brought military adventurers to the front, not through merit, merely because they controlled imposing arrays of mailed fists.

One of them, Erh-Chu-jung, a Tunguse of Shansi with a hungry wolf's keen scent for prey, had sold his land, using the

proceeds to raise large numbers of horses, and keep 7,000 well-armed dare-devils at his beck and call. Thus equipped he soon became a law unto himself and with Kao Hüan's advice fermenting in his ear, he presently swelled into being a law unto others.

This Kao Hüan was a small, sly, nimble-witted Chinese with all the cunning cruelty and pent-up hatred years of foreign oppression often beget in the brain of the unjustly dispossessed. He also was out to fish in troubled waters and may from the first have used his barbarian friend's troopers to keep the mud stirred up till he had landed his catch.

Probably at his suggestion Erh-Chu-jung assumed the rôle of avenger of the Dowager's poisoned son. Political robbers like to open their attack under cover of a flag that stands for some eminently righteous cause.

He also pretended to champion the popular desire for a grown man on the throne of the Weis instead of the baby sprawling there under the eye of the universally detested Empress-Dowager.

He did actually by means of the favourite device of image-casting, discover which Toba prince fate considered eligible. Having found him, he seized the bridgehead commanding the approach to Lo yang and proclaimed him Emperor.

Terror fell on the Dowager and her supporters in the capital.

And well it might. Years of peace and petticoat-government had allowed military matters to fall into such neglect, Erh-Chu-jung's 7,000 cut-throats sufficed to paralyse any effort of resistance. There was only one hope left—the Church. She had done so much for it. Surely it would not forsake her. So she fled from the threatened Palace to a quiet nunnery, and she who would never wear anything less exquisite than Indian gauze, submitted to putting on the coarse cotton robe of a nun. She even cut off her hair in token of complete renunciation of mundane matters. But the Church failed to protect her. She had over-estimated its strength. It never made good such a right of sanctuary as the more skilfully organized mediaeval Church of Europe was able to secure. Both she and Liang Wu Ti in the hour of their need got no real help from the Buddhist monkhood.

For this they had only themselves to blame. They should have known where the true strength of the state was to be found, namely in a picked body of civil and military officials trained in the school of K'ung-Tzū to a high standard of efficiency and civic virtue.

From a political view-point Buddhism at best was only useful



as a sedative for the masses and as a bond of sympathy and unification between the various races dwelling within or near the Chinese Empire. It gave the ruler pious subjects, brilliant artists, exquisite dreamers.

It did not give him those intensely loyal, profoundly national and patriotic men who had supplied the Hans with generations of incomparable soldiers and administrators.

Yet the main problem of that epoch not being political but moral, namely the evolution of a type blending the best there was in Barbarian and Chinese and attenuating their many differences, and Buddhism proving far the best instrument for this particular task, it inevitably became the sun which outshone every other light. Thousands were drawn into the orbit of its splendour.

Liang Wu Ti was completely dominated by it. Thrice he left palace, treasures, wives and children and gave himself up body and soul to the worship of Buddha in his beloved T'ung T'ai monastery, the first time in 527, just one year before the Wei Dowager also renounced the world, though from such very different motives.

Her sudden conversion did not save her. Buddha turned away from her piety of fear, and the poor woman to whose munificence the world owes many an exquisite statue of this great Teacher, many a stone image of benign Gods of Mercy, was not to find a peaceful end within cloister walls sweet with incense, lotus-blooms and the music of wind-stirred bells. These things meant nothing to Erh-Chu-jung.

He had but one article of faith, which was that dead enemies are better than live ones. By his order she was dragged from her hiding-place, away towards the river, and together with the poor little dethroned baby, Lin-t'ao Wang, she was pitched over the parapet of the bridge into the waters below.

This double execution should have been amply sufficient for the security of the new order of things. But Erh-Chu-jung was not seeking security so much as the gratification of the blood-lust which in times of change so often obsesses men new to power, drunk with power and totally unworthy of it.

All the Dowager's ministers and officers, barely dangerous while she was still alive and now only scheming how to retire most speedily into safe obscurity, were treacherously convoked together, surrounded by soldiers of the man who pretended to champion the cause of righteousness and butchered in cold blood, to the number of 2,000, a suitable overture to the procession of inconceivable horrors which filled the political stage both in Northern and Southern China for nearly half a century,

which first split up and then knocked down the Tobas, wiped out the two dynasties that had deposed them, and in the glare of his burning books hurled the last Liang Emperor from the throne into a nameless grave.

It was an age of fierce contrasts all black and all white with no neutral tints to mediate between them.

On the white side, Liang Wu Ti, with his desire to abolish capital punishment altogether, even for criminals, and who would only sign a death-warrant in extreme cases and with bitter tears ; on the black side, Erh-Chu-jung and his brothers torturing and slaying innocent people merely to demonstrate their power ; Kao Hüan and his brothers, sons and nephews, whose cruelty put that of the wildest savages to shame ; Hou Ching, the traitor, who revenged himself of Liang Wu Ti's spiritual superiority by stealing his worldly power, and used it so abominably he dared not show his Judas face outside the palace walls, but set up a press in its secret dungeons with which literally to crush anyone who had whispered or who was merely suspected of having whispered against him.

Several of the Yü Wens also inclined to cruelty and despotism. Had they not established their dynasty, the Northern Chou, by a series of murders perpetrated on the Tobas and on inconvenient members of their own clan ? Thus the black side appears considerably stronger than the white, indeed anyone aiming at power unhesitatingly acted on the principle that in that pitiless game there was no middle course between killing or being killed. To get your hands round the throat of your rivals first and round as many throats as possible afterwards, was considered the Alpha and Omega of success. And so it was for a while, just for the length of time needed for Liang Wu Ti's and Bodhidharma's ideals to penetrate into the masses and for these to get surfeited to the point of exasperation with the black leaders' infamies.

The ultimate triumph not perhaps of the super-pure white of those towering figures, but of a serviceable whiteness, adapted to the needs of normal human beings, was due partly to their example, largely to that nucleus of wise, quiet men, faithful guardians of the treasures bequeathed and nourished by the Spirits of the land, a nucleus that never failed to survive even the most terrible political disaster, and ultimately, and perhaps most decisively, to the many Buddhist monasteries scattered throughout the country and which, though pandering somewhat to popular superstitions, did provide live centres of an extraordinarily refined and beautiful type of culture. Powerless against brute force, these gathering places of the spiritually



mind had an immense power of attraction for the bulk of the people, outwardly cowed but inwardly repelled by the foul methods of the Erh-Chu-jungs, Kaos and Hou Chings. Rule by fear and the extermination of enemies scarcely ever endures long, because fear is a sensation from which everybody wants to escape, and the seemingly exterminated are apt to resurrect a vast phalanx of avenging ghosts.

Liang Wu Ti, during his long meditations in the peace of his beloved T'ung T'ai Sze, probably foresaw the final victory of mercy and in spite of apparently overwhelming failure never lost the conviction that the path he had chosen was the right one. That it was extreme lay in his character and in that of his age, imagination set on fire by Buddhist heavens and Taoist miracles, personal experience darkened by frightful calamities, the fine perception of the old national sages for moderation, harmony and common sense temporarily almost quite submerged.

Liang Wu Ti's ministers who did not share the general infatuation, were at their wits' ends to know what to do about their master's flights from the world it was his duty to rule. Twice they paid the monastery large sums of money to release the Emperor from its spell.

For the Son of Heaven to shut himself up in a monk's cell and trust to the country governing itself must have struck them as an outrage on the common sense they still believed in. Yet under a strange disguise this emperor recluse was really carrying out the old ideal of the Sovereign who, having fixed thoughts and heart on the immovable, divinely upheld centre of being, was able to keep order by merely sitting still.

But the practical application of ideals is always a dangerous experiment. Liang Wu Ti's third withdrawal from the sinful world undoubtedly caused his downfall. It happened that the world was more than usually sinful just then, crazy with war, black with discontent at any moment liable to erupt in open treason. The old sore between the Empire and the Weis had started running again. Since 534 the latter were split into an Eastern and a Western half.

This had not damped their hatred of the South or their covetous designs on its wealth; it had only given both one more country to hate and rob. Neither acquiesced in the separation or doubted that it could be terminated by force. Armistices occurred between them—peace never. Liang Wu Ti, meditating in the holy silence of his monastery, probably knew nothing of his generals' attempt at recapturing a northern fortress previously lost to Wei. Their idea was to reduce it by

drowning, a device tried once before, in 516, at immense cost of labour and material. Only the stupid dam broke prematurely and the still more unintelligent flood, taking the wrong direction, miserably drowned thousands of Liang subjects, while leaving the Wei stronghold all serene and dry. Nor did the Liangs succeed much better this time.

The Eastern Wei army rudely interrupted their damming operations, beat them home with bleeding backs, and ultimately relieved them of twenty-three prefectures.

This was not calculated to inspire the people with much faith in the efficacy of their Emperor's monastic meditations, and Hou Ching, for the tragic undoing of millions, finally including himself, decided to take advantage of this unsatisfactory state of things and seize the government about which its rightful owner seemed to care so little. This sinister individual had begun his career as provincial governor under the Weis, and during the troubles, which broke them in two, acquired considerable independence.

The ease with which unscrupulous adventurers like Erh-Chu-jung and Kao Huan had knocked down the old-established order of things and set up their own, inflamed his brains with the itch to imitate their bad example. Carefully he explored every opening into which a thievish hand might slip with the best chance of a substantial haul.

Totally unhampered by any sense of honour, any scruples of gratitude, within a few weeks he shifted his allegiance from the Eastern to the Western Weis, then to the Empire, only to betray it still more completely. It seemed the easiest and richest prey. Traitors being cowards mostly go in pairs. Before moving, Hou Ching made sure of a confederate. He found him in a Hsiao prince to whom his kinsman's aspirations to holiness probably seemed nothing better than the dotage of old age and who had been deeply infected by the immoral spirit rampant since the humiliation of the Toba dynasty. Instead of hindering he facilitated Hou Ching's passage across the Yangtze and thereby delivered the capital into his murderous hands—not at once though. The easy triumph which the plotters had expected turned into an embittered siege, crowding six months with breathless fluctuations of victory and defeat, calm and terror, sallies and retirements, to the final agony of sickness, famine, and enslavement.

By the beginning of 543 only one-tenth of the garrison remained, and these were gaunt grey ghosts of men. The rest lay rotting in ditches, moats, on battered walls or less hideously disintegrating beneath the earth mounds they had hastily



erected against those thrown up by the attacking force. But heavy rains undermined them ; they collapsed and even this last protection disappeared.

Still the city might have held out long enough to be relieved by outside help, had Hou Ching not used the favourite tricks of conquerors and lured citizens and soldiers away from their rightful allegiance by glittering promises of greater wealth and freedom. Thousands, dazed with hunger and privations, believed him and sneaked over to his side. The way he kept his word the moment victory made his power absolute was to arrest and execute any two persons seen talking together in the street. Their families were treated in the same genial manner. However, that occurred a few months later.

For the present to many he was the hero of the hour. His troops were allowed to gain a foothold at a carelessly guarded breach. That was the end. In vain the roll of the drum thundered round the vast stretch of the threatened walls clamouring for intensest fierceness of defence. Hunger and demoralization had done their work—hope was dead. The defence spluttered feebly and went out. Chien Kang was at the mercy of Hou Ching.

With 500 troops he clattered into the Palace, swaggered into the throne-room, perhaps intending then and there to mount the throne. But Liang Wu Ti sat on it weak and emaciated by the dreadful months of hunger, but such a fire burning in his large dark eyes, such majestic quiet in his bearing, Hou Ching's boldness oozed out of his pores in clammy sweat. The Emperor motioned him to take one of the seats reserved for ministers :

" You have been campaigning long. You must be tired." And that was all he deigned to say to the victorious rebel. Made painfully conscious of being a despicable worm, Hou Ching left Liang Wu Ti's disquieting presence with greater eagerness than he had sought it and carefully avoided meeting him again. It is not pleasant to be made to shrivel up into one's inborn worminess. He avenged himself by a series of mean and spiteful persecutions.

The aged Emperor having fallen ill asked for a little honey ; Hou Ching forbade any to be given him, and the sick man fancying nothing else, and feeling that life as a prisoner to such a jailer was scarcely worth preserving, refused all nourishment, and passed away into the Nirvana he had so often sought to reach.

## CHAPTER XII

### CLIMAX AND END OF SANGUINARY DIVISION

**M**ISUNDERSTOOD by his subjects in his lifetime, his death made so deep an impression that Hou Ching did not dare prevent his son from succeeding him, and contented himself a little longer with the rôle of Regent he had assumed immediately on entering the capital. So the Liang dynasty vegetated on another year, blighted and sapless under the black shadow of Hou Ching's impending usurpation. Possibly an Emperor of great strength of character might have averted it.

Chien Wên Ti seems to have been a limp fatalist, passively accepting whatever destiny held in store for him. It was nothing good. As if the horrors of the siege had not been a sufficient castigation, prolonged drought and a plague of locusts caused so severe a famine that there was nothing left to do even for the wealthy but to array themselves in their grandest robes and richest jewels, lock their doors, lie down and die. The resulting listlessness gave Hou Ching the longed-for opportunity of dethroning the Emperor, but, probably owing to the rising of a provincial governor, Ch'ên Pa Hsien, in the cause of legitimacy, he replaced him by another and no doubt still more docile Hsiao prince, Hsiao Tung. However, he soon tired of such a transitional state of things. The deposed Emperor was killed, the other imprisoned, and he himself proclaimed founder of a new dynasty with no less a name than Han. Notwithstanding which it was no milestone on the road of history, merely a pebble, quickly to be crushed to atoms by the trappings of an angry mob.

Ch'ên Pa Hsien's revolt now being directed by Hsiao I, the seventh son of Liang Wu Ti, and supported by another powerful military leader, Wang Seng pien, had grown strong enough to attack and beat Hou Ching. Deserted by his troops the arch deserter fled down river to the sea. But before he could reach it he was overtaken and cut down—cut up even,—his two hands were sent to Kao Chêng, King of Ch'i, who promptly murdered



his five sons ; his head was exhibited in Chiang Ling, his body torn to bits by the mob of Chien Kang and devoured. He had made them starve so much. Hsiao I became Emperor, but his friends, in those disjointed days as perilous as enemies, had pillaged Chien Kang so thoroughly, even burning the Palace to the ground, that he set up his residence in Chiang Ling, higher up the river. All this occurred in the last months of 551, tragic months which also saw the end of the Eastern Wei dynasty.

Toba Shan-chien, its first and last representative, after having had his ears boxed and his most faithful supporter boiled alive by Kao Ch'êng, worthy son and successor of Kao Huan, recognized the hopelessness of his position, left the palace in a humble ox-cart and sent the act of his abdication to Kao Yang, who as another son of Kao Huan's was guiding the family fortune up the dazzling height spied out and almost reached by his father and his brother Kao Ch'êng. That odious creature had been murdered by a war prisoner whom he had made a scullery slave and flogged into a frenzy of vindictive hate. The poor wretch paid for his not unnatural crime by being sliced and eaten. Such were Kao Yang's ideas of justice. No wonder the ex-King failed to move his heart to mercy by his voluntary abdication. He and his three sons were poisoned, their bodies flung into the Ch'ang River.

Later, in 559, Kao Yang had a careful search made for the remaining members of the Tobas. Men, women and children were massacred, their bodies also cast into the river. There were 721 thus pitifully bearing away into the deep ocean of oblivion the last faint hope of a revival of the Eastern Weis. They had been created by Kao Huan in 534 as a counter-blast to Yü-wên T'ai, another politician on the make, and instigator of the reigning Wei Emperor's, Yüan Hsiu's flight from Lo yang to Ch'ang-an out of reach of Kao Huan's growing insolence. It was the rivalry of these two men which tore the Wei Kingdom into an eastern half with a Toba prince, trembling at Ch'ang-an under the treacherous eye of Yü-wên T'ai, and a western one with another equally terrified Toba King at I playing the rôle of a screen behind which Kao Huan was maturing his plans for a change of dynasty.

Erh-Chu-jung, the friend on whose shoulders he had climbed into power, had dropped out of the race for the throne four years earlier, pierced by the sword of the Toba King he himself had chosen, but who was clever enough to forestall him in the popular game of murder. Yet he failed to win the decisive rubber. Erh-Chu-jung was only one of many. There existed an Erh Chu Chu lung, an Erh Chu Chao, an Erh Chu Chung

Yuan, an Erh Chu Tien Kuang. In those days all feuds were fought, all triumphs celebrated, all defeats endured by families rather than by individuals or parties. Killing one wasp, the unfortunate Toba Tsü-yu had roused the whole swarm to stinging rage. Swiftly they came buzzing all about him, looted his capital, stormed his palace, chained him to a pillar, beat his children to death before his eyes. Finally the worst, Erh Chu Chao, dragged him with him on an expedition to crush a loyalist rising and filled the measure of his revenge by having him throttled. He was only twenty-four.

Helter-skelter rival intrigues of the Erh Chus and of Kao Huan pitchforked three other princes unto the throne as his successor. For Kao Huan the wily, seeing that the Erh Chu clan's robbing and murdering were getting them universally hated, openly turned against them in 531. If they were wasps he proved a hornet. In two years' time he had stung them all to death, including their two Toba nominees, to whom he added his own Toba King, Yüan lang. The poor man had shown signs of a will of his own, a want of tact punishable with immediate execution according to Kao's ideas. He replaced him by a fifth Toba, Yüan Hsiu.

The pluck with which these descendants of a mighty house accepted the dangerous honour thrust on them by hands dripping with the blood of their relations, shows that they still believed in the possibility of regaining a grip on the reins of government which the same hands had snatched from them. Nor was such a hope utterly utopian. The habits of a century and a half are not destroyed in a hurry. People had grown accustomed to obeying the Tobas and knew they owed them a greater measure of security and prosperity than they had enjoyed since the glorious days of their own Hans. Had the Tobas not been aliens and had the bulk of the peasants not been reduced to serfs incapable of taking an active part in politics, grateful remembrance of the famous Toba rulers might have gathered enough force round their desperately struggling grandsons to save them from the clutches of their enemies.

These evidently believed in the possibility of a dynastic revival. They knew that they themselves possessed no popularity whatsoever, that their strength depended on their own wits and on the number and temper of their personal retainers. It was their luck and the dynasty's misfortune that most of them were born fighters (Erh-Chu-jung was of Tungusic, Yü-wên T'ai of Turkish descent), and that service under them held out such alluring prospects of bullying the helpless, plundering shops and palaces, making a fortune through the excitement of



war instead of by the drudgery of work, these troops of retainers easily attained numbers before whom the small force protecting legitimate authority shrunk into utter helplessness. Not these, but the aura of legitimacy, fear of the curses of dead Toba Kings, who might terribly avenge the stealing of the throne that had been theirs, in one case ill-luck in the casting of his effigy, kept the usurpers at bay at the Court of the Eastern Weis for sixteen, at that of the Western Weis for twenty-two years.

Fearful years of blood and travail and what they brought forth, merely two abortions, the Ch'i dynasty lasting twenty-seven and the Chou dynasty beginning seven years later, but eating up the Ch'i in 577, to be itself devoured in 581 by the Sui, not an abortion but a brilliant new birth, the inspired builder and preparer of the great way of the T'angs which was to swing the seventh and the eighth centuries unto levels of constructive activity as bright and lofty as the morass of destructive frenzy which disfigured almost the entire sixth century, had been black and bottomless. While it lasted human life, human feelings, human convictions, old-established rights, prosperous cities, splendid palaces, happy homesteads, peaceful monasteries, irreplaceable manuscripts, beautiful images, were all held as nothing compared to the glee it gave the monsters then ruling the world to damage and destroy them. Cold-blooded massacres of entire families and tribes aroused cries of horror only among the victims. The rest looked on indifferent to injustice, drugged by hopes of personal advantage, stupefied by fear. For tyranny was solidly entrenched behind the sharp swords of its bodyguard, keen to turn executioner since a share of the slain person's property was its acknowledged perquisite. But in the end the slaughterers were slain themselves.

The massacre of the Tobas was followed in 577 by that of the entire Kao brood at the hands of Yü-wên Yung, the Wu Ti of the northern Chous, and his family in its turn was utterly wiped out only four years later by Yang Chien, founder of the Sui dynasty, so relentless in this case because he was determined to make a clean sweep of murderers and their policy of brutality and crime.

The biggest of these wholesale butcheries was that of the Jou Jans, once a terror to the Weis, but gradually reduced by them and by the growing pressure of the Turks to a sorrowful band of refugees claiming and abusing hospitality in the manner of refugees. Yü-wên T'ai, no doubt thinking them an useful addition to his troops, allowed them to settle in Ch'ang-an. But the Turks, having tasted Jou Jan blood, thirsted for more and the Turks were a formidable military force just then. Yü-

wên T'ai the climber, the top rung of his ladder not yet fully in his grasp, certainly felt no desire to offend them. So he let them drive his luckless guests outside the city gates and kill them all. There were 3,000 corpses. But even this amount of blood was nothing compared to that shed in the constant wars, wars between North and South, between Ch'i and Chou, between these and the two new war-bringers to the north frontier, the Khitans at its eastern, and the Turks at its western end.

The capture of Ch'ang-an by Yü-wên T'ai's troops, supposedly acting for the Eastern Wei Toba Sovereign, reduced the population of a city which had a circumference of 20 miles to a bare hundred families. Children and aged people had been massacred, carried away as slaves, and treated so shamefully, one-half succumbed. At a siege Kao Huan undertook against a fortress of the Eastern Wei he lost 70,000 men. They were shovelled away in one huge pit. Who cared? Wars were meant to shorten life. Heaven itself seemed careless about it, sent famines down and epidemics.

No wonder the three systems which attempted to puzzle out its ways, disagreed, and disagreement in those passionate days meant angry edicts ordering either the closing of Confucianist schools, or the pulling down of Buddhist and Taoist temples, the burning of their books, the smashing of their images, the forcible secularization of their monks. Yü-wên Yung proscribed both Buddhism and Taoism. Kao Yang convened a theological congress at which delegates of the two religions had to propound their dogmas that he might choose between them, which by right of the priestly functions of a Son of Heaven he was entitled to do. Entitled—not qualified.

The decision having fallen in favour of the Buddhists, he forthwith ordered all Taoists to become Buddhists then and there under pain of immediate execution. Four having ventured to stand up for the rights of conscience were beheaded, an argument in favour of Buddhism, which the remainder thought it wiser not to contradict. They cut off their hair and professed to have done with Taoism. That system was altogether the least favoured by the northern rulers. They may have had some reason to look on it with suspicion. Having copied the monastic organization and many of those rites and teachings on which the popularity of Buddhism rested, Taoism had again grown into a power. Among the educated its mysticism, among the ignorant its magic, were once more a ferment capable of producing great movements and these, considering the unpopularity of the usurpers, might easily take an anti-dynastic turn.



In the South, on the contrary, Liang Yüan Ti favoured it almost as much as his father had favoured Buddhism, and publicly expounded the great truths taught by Lao Tzŭ. It is to be feared though, that the magic which formed part of the stock-in-trade of popular Taoism, attracted him also and that he credited the many books he collected with occult power for warding off misfortune.

Therefore, when in spite of their number (140,000) disaster overtook him, his armies defeated and dispersed, his capital cowering before merciless conquerors, the doom of degradation and death not a threat but a certainty, then, seeing that his faith had proved a vain illusion, he set fire to them all, and in the midst of the glare of their burning shattered his sword against the columns of the hall, exclaiming: "Good-bye to books and weapons." They should not survive him. They had betrayed him. At least he thought so, not realizing that it is never the things themselves but the use they are put to which brings failure or success. The strain of eccentricity which he inherited from his father seems to have alienated the sympathies of his relations.

It was a grandson of Wu Ti's, Hsiao Ch'a, gone over to the Weis, who took him prisoner as he moved out of the burning library dressed in the white of mourning. His captivity did not last long. Yü-wên T'ai had him killed together with his son and all prominent prisoners. Hsiao Ch'a probably hoped to become his uncle's successor and proclaimed himself Emperor of Liang. But it was only to be Minor Liang and his authority was not allowed to extend beyond a small principality tucked away between Ch'i and Western Wei, later Northern Chou, on the upper Yangtze. Even there he had to acknowledge the suzerainty of his big neighbour and exercise all the polite humility great powers expect from little ones. Yet he ruled wisely and well and was able to bequeath to his son Hsiao Kuei a contented, prosperous state.

In Hsiao Kuei the literary gifts of the family manifested themselves once more and in his quiet but happy corner of the world he embodied that splendid Sino-Indian type, blending Buddhist gentleness with Confucian discipline which was to dominate the future. His son Hsiao Tsung, who succeeded in 585, followed in his footsteps. He did not resist the tide of centralization which the Sui dynasty had started, and to save his subjects useless bloodshed, submitted to the mediatization of his Kingdom. In 587 he exchanged sovereignty in a small state for high office on the larger sphere of a reunited China.

The main Liang Empire had come to a far less pleasant end

thirty years earlier. Robbed and despoiled by Yü-wên T'ai's armies, it was pulled together by its two strongest generals, Ch'ên Pa-hsien and Wang Sêng-pien. The former placed Hsiao Fang-chih, the ninth son of Yüan Ti, on the throne. He was only thirteen, and Wang Sêng-pien decided to champion another candidate. For which act of disloyalty he was pounced upon and killed by Ch'ên Pa-hsien. Not that Ch'ên Pa-hsien's own loyalty was to remain proof against the temptation of turning so young an Emperor out of office, and substituting a man's ability for a boy's inexperience. Already in 557 he made the young Emperor abdicate, imprisoned and killed him, knocked down the Liang milestone and triumphantly set up his own.

The same year saw another landmark disappear—the Western Wei. Yü-wên T'ai, who had worked so hard to make it fall, just missed witnessing the consummation of his efforts. But his son Yü-wên Chuo ate the dish his father had prepared, unseated and slew the last Toba shadow on the throne, proclaimed the Western Wei dynasty terminated and his own that of the Northern Chou begun. But the blood-spiced food disagreed with him. He had not enjoyed the pomp of royalty more than a few months, before an elder cousin, to whom Yü-wên T'ai had entrusted his sons, murdered and replaced him by his half-brother Yü-wên Yü. Not fancying him much better he killed him also. Yü-wên princes were apparently plentiful.

There was a third son of Yü-wên T'ai's on whom to confer the perilous dignity of King of Chou. But this one, Yü-wên Yung, warned by the fate of his brothers, was determined not to share their fate. Pretending that his mother had contracted unpleasant drinking habits—which apparently was not an incredible thing at that choice Court—he begged his amiable cousin as the oldest kinsman to kindly lecture her on the subject. Suspecting no harm, Yü-wên Hu consented to do so, and backed by chapter and verse of the classics was holding forth on the horrors of drunkenness, when the King approached him from behind and knocked him senseless with his jade sceptre. After that the process of beheading the man before whom all had trembled for years was easy.

Yü-wên Yung now breathed freely and proved an energetic ruler, earning the title of martial Emperor (Wu Ti). It was he who put an end to the monstrous rule of the Kaos and reunited the two severed halves of the former Wei State. He also fought the Turks, though their Khan had given him one of his daughters in marriage. The hardships of the campaign broke down his health; he returned only to fall ill and die.

Yü-wên Pinn, the son who succeeded him, thought it wiser



to make peace and renew the former friendship, though it involved the sending of a royal princess to the Turks plus annual presents of many rolls of costly silk. Apart from this peace treaty and the repeal of his father's anti-Taoist and Buddhist legislation, Yü-wên Pinn showed neither aptitude nor inclination for governing. Religious mania, of which his own person as the Heavenly Principle was the centre, began to cloud his brain. No mortal was allowed to approach his august presence except after purification and three days' fasting. Was he not the equal, maybe even the superior, of Lao Tzū and Buddha, between whose statues he loved to sit? And as such was he not also entitled to chastise erring mortals? The chastisement took the form of a dose of 120, later increased to 240 blows, and was applied with cheerful impartiality to servants, officers, queens, concubines, ladies-in-waiting. It must have made life in the palace of Ch'ang-an quite exciting: the already victimized perhaps betting on who would be the next recipient of this celestial bastonade as it was euphemistically called. However it soon palled on its inventor.

Already in 579 he abdicated in favour of his little son Yü-wên Chou, aged seven, whose brief reign and life were ended two years later by his maternal uncle, the chancellor Yang Chien, Duke, King, finally Emperor of Sui and master of a China, but for north-eastern and western curtailments, as great as that of the Hans. Such an achievement, nothing less than the reunion of provinces divided from each other for three centuries, the obliteration of long-standing enmities between South and North invader and native, Buddhist and Confucianist, was the result of a singular combination of circumstances, the appearance of a man of Yang Chien's remarkable military and political ability, widespread weariness of internal strife, the urgency of opposing a strongly centralized organization to the danger threatening from the growing power of Khitans and Turks, lastly the extreme weakness of the dynasties standing for separatism.

The Ch'êns, though representing the legitimate Empire, had not the stuff to carry out the desired unification themselves, but neither did they possess the strength to prevent it. The organization of the South never seems to have recovered the harm inflicted by Hou Ching's revolt. Yü-wên T'ai was able to destroy Liang Yüan Ti in his capital with the greatest ease, and though under the fourth Ch'ên Emperor, Hsüan Ti, the South successfully attacked Northern Ch'i, it did so at a time (573) when an utterly worthless ruler, Kao Wei, was heading state and dynasty to the abyss.

Even the very first Ch'ên Emperor, though a good general

of the school of Hsiao Yen and a descendant of Ch'ên Shih, one of the most famous of the great Han magistrates, seems to have lost heart over the prospects of his dynasty. Perhaps the ghosts of the murdered Liangs haunted the Palace and troubled his rest. Only one year after his accession he turned to Buddhism for consolation and died devoutly as a professing monk twelve months later. Having no son, he left the newly acquired throne to a nephew who reigned, died and was buried. He had some leaning towards letters, a fact commemorated by entering him as Wên Ti, the Scholarly Emperor, in the records of his dynasty.

His son Ch'ên Po-tsung was swept off the throne and into limbo by his brother Ch'ên Hsu, who also reigned, died and was buried. Before the last ceremony was accomplished, and while the mourning rites were duly proceeding, Ch'ên Shu-pao, the son and heir, kneeling in tears before the coffin, a younger brother of his, covetous of the throne, struck him with a dagger intended to put an end to both his lamentations and rejoicings. But it only inflicted a wound, from which he recovered, and it was the would-be murderer and emperor who descended to the Yellow Springs instead. Perhaps it would have been better if the rôles had been reversed, for Ch'ên Shu-pao committed every folly known to ruin dynasties. As the censor Fu tsai, courageously upbraiding him to his face, said:

"He was drunk, dissolute, neglectful of the Great Spirits of Heaven and his ancestors, addicted to foolish superstitions, and surrounded by worthless companions."

State affairs were controlled by eunuchs, a breed always antagonistic to honest officials and the interests of the people. To obtain the sums squandered on his seraglio and his stables, his subjects were taxed so cruelly that many died of misery, others fled the country. The Gods despised, the people cursed him. How should his luck endure? The Emperor refused to swallow the bitter medicine of reproof and ordered the over-truthful adviser to continue his admonitions in the Beyond, a warning to other advisers not to criticize Imperial behaviour. State affairs and appointments continued to pass through the hands of eunuchs and concubines, hands supple and small, but monstrously greedy and strong enough to break anyone refusing to fill them. The worship of Heaven continued to be neglected; with the shaking of tambourines, the waving of wands and elaborate pantomimes, incantations continued to be made against the power of malignant goblins; money continued to be extorted from the toilers and spent on the embellishment of the residence Ch'ên Shu-pao had built for his and his ladies' delectation.



It was a real dream-palace or rather a group of turreted palaces, mirroring their graceful outlines from the height of three artificial hillocks in the clear waters of flower-fringed streams and ponds. The most precious woods and stones were used for the interior decoration. Blocks of brilliantly glazed terra-cotta, the biggest that had ever been made, were ordered to enhance the splendour of a colonnade—but they split under the weight of the pillars, and this attempt at novelty had to be abandoned.

The life within these sumptuous buildings was in keeping with their fantastic beauty. It was gay, frivolous, utterly irresponsible—but with an ardour for music and poetry, which redeemed it from viciousness. A kind of academy had even been established in its halls, at which professionals initiated the fair in the subtleties of versification and composition. The Emperor found it much more entertaining to listen to the songs they produced, he and his ministers joining in the chorus, than to hear what his generals had to report about the state of the army and the safety of the frontiers. These were gravely imperilled since a great power had arisen across the Yangtze, all the more formidable that it aimed less at military than at political conquests. It had reunited the North, absorbed the Minor Liang, repulsed the Turks in the most sensible campaign on record, the issue being decided by single combat between the two champions of the opposing armies, who could see no point in the wholesale slaughter of men against whom they felt no personal animosity whatever.

Yang Chien, the ruler of this expanding state, was a man whom to see was to obey, energetic, frugal, hard-working and surrounded by a staff of equally able men. Clearly in a struggle between him and the lazy sybarite at Chien Kang, the chances were all in his favour. But the sybarite thought otherwise. Had not Ch'ên tried twice and Ch'i three times to conquer the South and always failed? Was it not unconquerable behind the deep flow of the Yangtze across which only birds could fly? He forgot that invaders can cross the widest river on boats, and that the forces of the two northern states were now united in one hand, able and eager to use them to the utmost.

Yang Chien opened the attack by a proclamation in which the Ch'ên Emperor's failings, his prodigality, his dissoluteness, his tyranny, his injustice, his irreverence, his superstitions were enumerated at such length and in such black colours, the man who sought to remove him from the throne must needs appear a public benefactor. This propagandist manifesto was scattered in 300,000 copies throughout the length and breadth

of China. The accused received one also. But he paid no more attention to it than to his dead censor's warnings. Only when black and thick as evening crows, news poured in of Yang Chien's troops swarming across the river at Chiang Ling, sweeping everything before them, paralysing all resistance, reaching the capital, seizing it, marching towards the palace, then he had to pay attention.

Immediately all his confidence melted into abject fear. Unable to face the dreadful hour alone, he got himself tied to his two favourite concubines and lowered into a dry well, in the desperate hope of escaping capture. Of course the pitiful trio was found, pulled out, brought to the victorious generals. One of the women was the famous Chang Li-hua, whose wit and beauty had ruled supreme at Ch'ên Shu-pao's luxurious Court. Her loveliness was so exquisite, her long dark hair, trailing to the ground so wonderful, she seemed an immortal come down to earth. The Emperor always called her his fair Goddess of the Moon. One of Yang Chien's generals was most anxious to obtain her, but another considered her too great a danger to be kept alive. So the poor Goddess of the Moon had to wind her long black hair around her and go the way little Golden Lily feet had gone eighty-seven years before, at the downfall of another dynasty. She seems to be the only one who suffered death.

Yang Chien, aiming at complete unification, had the greatness to understand that only a generous victor really beats his enemies. Cruelty strengthens, magnanimity disarms opposition. The new era which was arising and which he was helping to bring about, meant a determined turning away from the foul passions which had made such a nightmare of the last fifty years. He had exterminated the Yü-wêns when he seized their throne—possibly at that treacherous Court no milder proceeding would have been safe, but having dispossessed the Ch'êns, he wisely refrained from antagonizing the South by ill-treating their Emperor. When he was brought before him at Ch'ang-an, he merely presented him to his ancestors, read him a severe lecture, but spared him all further humiliations. On the contrary, he settled an income on him large enough to permit a continuation, though on a somewhat reduced scale, of his former gay life of wine, women and song. It agreed with him so well, he reached the age of fifty-two, the average time limit in his family, and died peacefully in 604 as Duke of Ch'ang Ch'êng. All his relations were treated equally well, peacefully they dropped into obscurity, bloodlessly Yang Chien replaced the Ch'ên milestone by his own.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SUI DYNASTY

**B**UT for all the ease and gentleness with which this was done, it marked a change of direction more revolutionary than any that had occurred since the days when Ch'in Shih Huang Ti knocked the separate states together by the power of his sword and the cunning of Li Ssü. Not merely had the wound gaping between north and south been closed and the political supremacy of the barbarians terminated, but barbarian mentality had been overcome also ; joyful confidence in a future of peace, security, wide horizons and large interests filled the air. The population increased from four to nine million families. The penal code was simplified and rendered less severe, though even a small theft was still punished with death.

“ Let war cease.  
Let men apply themselves to study.  
Let arms be confiscated and destroyed.”

Thus Yang Chien admonished his subjects old and new, comprehensively epitomizing the pre-requisites of peace, prohibition of bloodshed, enlightenment, disarmament. And he was not a man of mere words. Any order he gave, any proclamation he issued, was meant to be turned into concrete fact and woe betide the official who by any chance thought otherwise. Yang Chien in his rage was terrible and would actually and mercilessly beat those failing in duty. He could even have them summarily beheaded and watch their poor muddled, terrified heads roll off their shoulders just outside the Council Hall.

The Censors had the courage to remonstrate against such excessive severity and he had the wisdom to accept the rebuke and to allow the sticks with which he used to vent his anger on his ministers to be taken away. But with his nerves probably strained to the utmost by the immensity of the task he had undertaken, accomplished, and was obliged vigilantly to labour at maintaining, he soon lost his temper again. In

the absence of sticks, the next minister who displeased him was horsewhipped. However the generals and magistrates who did their duty well, found him a just and generous master. There was faculty for deep attachment in his troubled soul. He had fallen in love with a great-granddaughter of one of the foremost Liang generals, probably come into his palace as a war prize. No doubt she added all the graces and accomplishments of the southern Court to her natural beauty. The Empress, on the other hand, of Tungusic extraction, must have lacked such elegances completely, and was besides still a child of that fierce age of unbridled passion, which though ending, was not yet gone. Realizing her inferiority she got rid of the pangs of envy by ordering her detested rival to be killed. The Emperor in a paroxysm of grief threw himself on his horse and wandered about all alone in the mountains, miles away from the Palace, mourning for the beautiful being who would never come back to him. Yet he forgave the Empress.

That energetic lady exercised all the power a cruel and domineering woman knows so well how to obtain and so little how to use. It was her evil influence that nursed the little speck of envy so often present in the relations between the old and the rising generation to such proportions, the Emperor degraded and imprisoned his eldest and best son, replacing him in the succession by Yang Kuang, the second and the one who hastened both his end and that of the dynasty.

Still as the old man lay dying in the great palace that had been built for him, he could look back on a reign of many more achievements than failures. By a skilful mixture of wars, treaties, and a strengthening of the Great Wall he had kept the Turkish menace at bay, he had closed the dreadful era of weakness and division and given his people peace at home, freedom from oppressive taxation and the immense benefit of a just and efficient administration. He had set his Court a fine example of industry and simplicity and left his son a full treasury, a disciplined army, a contented population, secure frontiers. What use did the new Emperor make of these advantages, sufficient with even moderately intelligent handling, to have ensured the dynasty at least a substantial portion of the duration of 3,000 years which an obliging soothsayer had foretold? The same soothsayer, however, evidently not a quack, whispered to a friend that the choice of Yang Kuang as the founder's successor had reduced the splendid allowance to a petty 30 years. Not that Yang Kuang was lacking in intelligence or energy, but he wasted them on ill-considered enterprises and mad expeditions, and above all on the



gratification of his love of luxury and sensual delights. Moral considerations had no hold on him whatever.

His only approach to the Unknown was through faith in predictions, his only hold on religion the routine of prescribed custom, and he kept to that merely from policy, not from conviction. When he performed the sacrifice to Heaven he did so without any sense of its solemn significance and dispensed with all preparatory abstinence and purification.

He began by making love to one of his father's concubines, while the father lay on his death-bed, and to escape the consequences of this disgraceful behaviour sent one of his men into the sick-room to hurry on the end. He continued by ordering his imprisoned brother to commit suicide, and then from sudden caprice or from dread of the ghosts of his victims haunting the palace where they had been killed, decided to have a new and immense residence built at Lo yang.

While two million workmen were toiling away at its construction, he got another few thousands to link up the various navigable waterways between the Yellow River and the Yangtze, and some hundred shipwrights, carpenters and varnishers to construct and decorate the most luxurious dragon-boats ever conceived. His own had four decks, the upper one containing the throne-room and the private apartments, the second 120 exquisite rooms to accommodate the sweet charmers without whom he could not exist. It is fair to say though, that his Empress was provided with an equally luxurious floating palace. The boats carrying Imperial princes and princesses, ministers, Court officials, priests, ambassadors, also furnished with the utmost elegance, numbered several hundreds—with the junks of the attendant eunuchs, guards and waiting-women the fleet amounted to some thousands and towed by 80,000 men dressed in gaily patterned suits, covered the waterways for a length of sixty-six miles with a brilliant pageant of colour, pomp, music, merriment and life. A mounted guard with glittering arms and streaming pennants escorted it along both banks. Long lines of willows had also been planted to provide the dreamy gliding of the Imperial barges with a frame of tender green. It must have been during the enchantment of one of these voyages, the waters of the Yangtze lapping against the prow of his boat, that he fixed a lovely impression in the following lines :

“ The evening river motionless, level ;  
Spring colours just opening out to their full.  
Sudden a wave bears the bright moon away  
And tidal waters flow in with rich freight of stars.”

He was genuinely interested in literature—ordered a vast anthology of no less than 17,000 chapters to be compiled on every conceivable topic from ethics to games. He also had all the books in the Imperial residences of Ch'ang-an and Lo yang collected together in one properly catalogued library. There at Lo yang, in his new palace, the enchantment of his river trip continued. There were more boating excursions on a huge artificial lake, out of which islands arose, 100 feet high, rich with foliage, wonderful kiosks, lovely pavilions like the buildings of immortals in distant seas of golden dawns. Along the outflow of this dream lake, the sixteen villas of his favourites vied with each other in the profusion of their flowers, the grace of their verandas and the attractiveness of their landing steps, for they, too, could best be approached by boat—such was this nautical Emperor's fancy.

He liked riding too—and on warm moonlit nights would gallop through the vast grounds escorted by a thousand lovely Amazons, halting occasionally at romantic spots to drink and sing and pour the music of fresh young voices and vibrating silver strings into the silver of the night. Winter was not allowed to penetrate into this fairy Paradise. When the leaves fell and the blossoms faded, a host of clever hands set to work to cover branches and beds with foliage and flowers of bright coloured silk. But the Emperor was not content with riding round his park, although it covered about sixty square miles.

An immense restlessness possessed him. In his reign of thirteen years he undertook no less than five extensive Imperial progresses and three military expeditions to Korea, all of which were extremely costly and wrecked the financial equilibrium attained by his father. He did not care. The ever-handly screw of taxation was given another turn, schemes of lucrative conquests and colonizations were pushed through, wealthy merchants attracted to Lo yang. So the expensive journeys could be resumed with all the grandeur befitting the Sovereign of a reunited China.

Yang Ti had a passion for display and would have scorned the idea of travelling without a gigantic retinue of bodyguards, attendants male and female, and all the comforts of his palace lugged along with him. It meant a caravan 330 miles long. The people of the districts through which it passed were compelled to repair or make roads and bridges to ensure pleasant travelling to His August Majesty, while the governors had to supply dainties for his table and solid food for his escort. It was a heavy tax.

Still one of these progresses did achieve some definite good.



It was a visit to the great Khan of the Turks, on the grassy plains by the Great Wall, and helped to make friends of these uncomfortable neighbours at least for a few years. The visit being official, the Empress accompanied her husband and was entertained by the Khan's wife in her tent. The 3,000 concubines were for that one occasion left at Lo yang to practise their singing and riding. Perhaps it was feared that the Khan, notwithstanding his nomad habits, might be shocked at the sight of such an abundance of femininity. The meeting went off with much amiable toasting, talking, presentation of mutual gifts and compliments.

But during a later progress north, the Turks, under a new Khan, were anything but pleasant—and the poor Emperor, suddenly finding himself surrounded by enemies where he had expected friends, was obliged to run for safety to the Yen Mên Kuan, a fortress at the Great Wall and dodge as best he could the volleys of arrows which the perfidious barbarians sent flying after him. The citadel only had enough supplies for three weeks. What if hunger should compel the garrison to surrender to the bloodthirsty ruffians battering the walls?

Yang Ti exhorted each soldier to stand firm, promising substantial rewards. What proved still more useful, he secretly appealed to the Khan's mother, a Chinese princess, to extricate her compatriot out of his terrible plight. Which she did, causing rumours to be spread that a large body of Uiguirs had invaded the Khan's northern pasture grounds. As nothing gains credence more readily than panic-news, her stratagem succeeded. Seriously alarmed, the Turkish army loosed its grip on the Chinese fortress and sped home. So did Yang Ti, cured from all desire to undertake another progress beyond the Wall.

A former north-western journey of his to inspect some newly acquired and colonized districts, had also nearly ended in disaster. Delaying his departure too long, winter with its snow and blizzards overtook those 330 miles of carts, chairs, horses, mules and camels stumbling through the bleakness of inhospitable mountain-passes. Half the escort perished.

The loss of life occasioned by his military expeditions was, of course, far greater. Thus in the plundering incursion of 605 into Tonking, where the Sui army, beating the native levies in spite of their proud array of elephants, penetrated even further than the great Han general, Ma Yüan, sacked the capital and carried off eighteen statues of pure gold; half the soldiers died of sores on their legs during the march home.

The loss of life of the three Korean campaigns was more

serious still, as it involved the loss of the whole war. A foolish war, begun from some vainglorious idea of reconquering the far-flung frontiers of the Han Empire at its greatest, to keep the army in practice and to replenish the treasury with the anticipated loot. It turned out a hopeless miscalculation. The treasury was emptied, the army so demoralized, that in the third campaign mass desertions occurred at the very start. In a rage Yang Ti immolated those who were caught, and ordered flags and drums to be smeared with their blood.

Small wonder no great victories were won. The total result of expeditions in which over one million men, 50,000 war chariots, masses of siege machines, supply columns, transports had been set in motion was that the Koreans withdrew from the left bank of the Liao, and that their King promised to do homage to the Sui Emperor. But he never came to do so, which started one of Yang Ti's fits of savage fury, in which he had the Korean ambassador cooked and devoured by his officers. The days of the Kaos and Erh Chu-jungs seemed to have come back again.

But what these smaller rulers could allow themselves was intolerable in the universally acknowledged Son of Heaven. The growing spirit of seriousness, discipline, regard for moral worth, which had made unification possible, also demanded these qualities in the head of the Government. Buddhist ethics having by then penetrated into the masses, Yang Ti's ferocious punishments inspired disgust rather than fear. Nor was the dynasty sufficiently long established to be proof against the strain of an unsuccessful war. Observing which, a Yang prince, Yang Su, possibly with the idea of thereby saving the throne for the family, revolted and attacked Lo yang while the Emperor was away on his second Korean expedition. However, discontent had not yet reached explosion point, least of all in the capital where the people, though oppressed with taxes and forced labour, were dazzled by their Emperor's lavish splendour and felt no sympathy for anyone attempting to destroy it. The army, too, was still loyal—the great desertions only occurred in the third Korean campaign.

Hurrying back to Lo yang, it beat the rebel prince so thoroughly, he fled and put an end to his life. Three years later things had greatly changed for the worse. Yang Ti added mistake to mistake. He punished Yang Hsüan-kan's rebellion with such vindictiveness 30,000 people, mostly entirely innocent, were summarily executed.

In 613, hearing a prophecy that the next dynasty would be called "Li" and some private enemies working on his super-



stitious fears for their own ends, an entire family of thirty-two members whose only crime was their name Li, was accused of revolutionary designs and slain.

But there were other Lis left: Li Mi, an old friend of Yang Su, Li Yüan, Duke of T'ang, created prefect by Yang Ti himself in 613. This crazy slaughter of one Li family, shortly after followed by that of another, drove the remaining Lis into revolt in sheer self-defence. They also knew of that strange prophecy. Among Li Yüan's four sons, there was one, the second, Li Shih-min, who vaguely at first, then more and more consciously felt the stuff in him to realize it. But Yang Ti, blind to his interests, keen only on his amusements, sought escape from his worries in his favourite amusement of gondoliering.

The rebel prince, having had the unkindness to burn the first fleet of dragon-boats, a new one was ordered from the South, the simpler northerners not possessing the requisite skill. To while away the time of waiting, the boats on the palace lake which Yang Su had not been able to touch, took part in a series of regattas and mimic naval manoeuvres, which delighted the Emperor. But when these festivities terminated with a great conflagration and a large part of the boats went up in a thousand jets of sparks and flames, Yang Ti, fearing some attempt on his life, hid among his women and had his nerves so badly shaken, he kept on dreaming of these blazing boats and could find no peace from dreadful nightmares except surrounded by a number of concubines.

At last, to his great relief, the dragon-fleet arrived bright with fresh paint and spotless awnings. He at once started for the Yangtze in spite of the entreaties of his most loyal ministers. He requited their truthfulness by degrading the first, whipping and decapitating the second, having the tongue and then the head cut off of the third one.

It became impossible for self-respecting men to serve such a master. Therefore while he was gliding southward in a haze of music, wine and merriment, revolts flamed up behind him at a dozen points at once. Li Mi threatened the walls of Lo yang, Li Yüan those of Ch'ang-an. Overnight, out of the ground there sprang up robber-bands under leaders assuming the dignity of princes, and armies under governors arrogating to themselves the right of replacing the discredited Sui dynasty by one of their own. Old fissures and dissensions reappeared. So did the old names Wei, Chou, Chin, Sung. For a while a grandson of Hsiao Yen re-established the Liang dynasty at its old capital, Chiang Ling.

Another rebel called himself Khan of Ting Yang, a significant title indicating Turkish influence, not to say interference. In true neighbourly fashion Turks did as a matter of fact interfere very actively in this sudden and to them by no means unwelcome break-up of the Sui Empire. Their meddling, though, was in the end to bring them little satisfaction. It was their assistance that enabled Li Yüan to beat his rivals and establish the T'ang dynasty, which was to put an end to Turkish supremacy around and beyond the Great Wall.

But these developments lay hidden in the impenetrable future and could not have been anticipated by anyone only knowing Li Yüan, a well-meaning but weak individual. They could not guess that his son Li Shih-min was one of those geniuses occasionally bestowed on a people to give its fate a sudden lift into the sunshine of prosperity and strength.

Therefore, gaily looking forward to a long spell of a helpless and divided China pleasant to exploit and pluck, the Turkish cavalry joined forces with Li Yüan in the eighth month of 617. Two months later their united armies were campaigning and circling round Ch'ang-an. Yang Yu, a grandson of Yang Chien, was in command of the city—nominally,—he was only thirteen, and of course perfectly unable to stop the stampede of defection and surrender that spread through the garrison like dry-rot. One assault was enough to frighten it into submission. Li Yüan entered the palace and constituted himself guardian of the young prince. Soon he made him Emperor in place of Yang Ti, declared unworthy of the Dragon Throne, and took unto himself the titles and functions of King of T'ang, Chancellor of the Empire, and actual ruler within the radius of his military strength.

About the same time, Li Mi seized the huge granaries which Yang Ti had erected near Lo yang, called himself Duke of Wei, and though somewhat half-heartedly, co-operated with Li Yüan. The other leaders all worked each one for himself, busily undoing the unification Yang Chien had laboured so hard to accomplish. They fought each other and what was left of Imperial troops. Between them and Turks and soldiers turning robbers, and robbers disguised as soldiers, peaceful citizens fared badly, and as in all troubled times, began to long for the super-man possessing the magic spell to evoke order out of chaos. Yang Ti most emphatically was not that man.

Tired of the joys of navigation, yet painfully aware that an attempt to return to the magnificence of Lo yang would be anything but a pleasure trip, Yang Ti decided to acquiesce in the partition of his empire, only saving for himself the slice





T'ANG TAI-TSUNG (LI SHIH-MIN)  
(597-649 A.D.)



T'ANG WU HON (625-705 A.D.)  
THE EMPRESS WU





round the lower Yangtze. There he would build himself a second palace as splendid as the one he had lost, and continue to drink and make merry with his 3,000 concubines. But his bodyguard, all northerners, saw matters in a different light. To serve a wealthy Emperor near their own home was one thing; to protect a bankrupt one in the mugginess of the South quite another. With so many mouths to feed and nine-tenths of the taxpayers handing their quotas to the newly-sprouting dynasties, a serious shortage of supplies soon began to make itself felt in the Imperial residence at Kiang Tou. Hunger appeared, and hunger is a great dissolver of loyalty. Neither did Yang Ti possess any of the qualities which inspire storm-proof devotion. Most of his guards conspired to get rid of a master who kept all the feasting to himself. On a moonless night they gathered in the grounds outside the palace walls, shouting to each other and finding their way by the light of torches. Seeing which Yang Ti asked:

"What are those lights in the black of night?"

"It is the tall grass burning."

"What are those shouts in the dead of night?"

"Only some men putting out the flames."

Reassured he went to bed, but in the grey light of the very next dawn, the rush and roar of armed invaders woke him to cold sweat of fear. He disguised himself, fled and hid in the Eastern Pavilion. One of his 3,000 concubines betrayed him. He was seized and dragged to the leader of the plot—Yü-wên Hua-chi:

"Why bring this beast to me alive?"

Yang Ti pleaded: "I have done you no harm."

"You have ruined the Empire."

And forthwith he was strangled. All sons and male relations were killed as well, all except Yang Hao, on whom Yü-wên Hua-chi thrust the melancholy rôle of prolonging the death throes of the Sui dynasty for the few weeks needed to popularize its successor. He soon was dead, but so was Yü-wên Hua-chi, defeated and killed by one of Li Yüan's officers.

Simultaneously Yang T'ung, another grandson of the founder, and brother to Yang Yu, had been proclaimed Emperor by Wang Shih-ch'ung, a Sui general defending Lo yang against Li Mi. He also perished of the deadly honour. His dying prayer before he swallowed the poison sent him by Wang Shih-ch'ung was, never to be reborn an Imperial prince. This happened in 619. The same year Li Yüan's nominee, Yang Yu, also breathed his last, no one knew how, though every one knew why.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RISE OF THE T'ANG DYNASTY

**J**UST one year before, in the fifth month of 618, Yang Yu had abdicated in favour of his Chancellor Li Yüan, King of T'ang, father of Li Shih-min and therefore founder of the T'ang dynasty, that glorious dynasty whose milestone is placed on one of the radiant heights of the history of the whole world. For the wealth and leisure due to the stable political and economic conditions it achieved, were spent on works of immortal beauty in the domain of poetry and the three great arts.

Of these palace and tomb architecture had indeed found its basic form under the Hans, that of Buddhist temples under the Weis and Chins, and except in details, particularly in a great and more varied use of glazed tiles and ornaments, wisely refrained from an originality which was wholly uncalled for and could not in any case have been achieved in an art that had already found the true lines of its inspiration. Also in its massive force and immobility it was quite unsuited to really express the milder, subtler, extraordinarily mobile spirit of the T'ang period. Even sculpture was too heavily weighted with matter to be able to follow T'ang imagination on the whole wide range of its flights, and slipped from the favoured position it occupied at the Court of the Tobas. The cave statuary these had begun with such magnificence was, however, preserved and continued.

Pious pilgrims and in one case even a professional sculptor in the suite of Wang Hsuan-tze, Tai Tsung's enterprising ambassador at the Court of Magadha, brought back images from the fountain-head of Buddhist inspiration. These were eagerly copied and helped to people the many Buddhist temples built under the T'angs. The almost equally numerous Taoist monasteries and above all the superb processional avenues of the great tombs used sculpture abundantly and well. The two leading styles inherited the one from the Hans, the other from the Toba Weis, were perpetuated and fructified by all



the progress made in technical skill and breadth and delicacy of vision. Tai Tsung's favourite chargers carved on his mausoleum, when compared to the horse guarding Ho Chü p'ing's grave, show a remarkable quickening and refining of artistic perception, though as is almost inevitably the case, with a corresponding loss of elemental vigour.

The clay horses and camels and the crowd of graceful little dancers, musicians, riders and serving-maids, with which the dim homes of the dead were enlivened, have long begun to eclipse the fame of Tanagra. In bronze, marble, wood and lacquer, pensive Kuanyins were fashioned with the smile of Mona Lisa, grave Buddhist Lohans, Taoist immortals, Confucian sages with the psychological insight, the fluidity of line, the accuracy of observation in the service of a large harmonious conception of life which breathed even more freely in T'ang poetry and painting, making their products models for ten thousand generations.

The poetry, though in a way only the prolongation of that of Ch'ü Yüan, Sung Yu and T'ao Ch'ien, did in such wonder-working hands as those of Li Tai Po, Tu Fu, Wang Wei, Po Chu I—to name but the best known—reach levels of beauty unattained before and probably unattainable since. Wang Wei was even greater as a painter than as a poet, and is one of the originators of those long rolls of dreamy mountain and river scenery and of painting in ink only, which is the supreme glory of Chinese pictorial art. He held high official rank under Hsüan Tsung, the sixth T'ang Emperor, himself a poet and painter. For painting, with the wide range of its possibilities, the extreme simplicity and portability of its materials, suited that sensitive age so perfectly, it became the indispensable part of a gentleman's education, and in the T'ang capital more than took the place modelling had occupied at the Court of the Tobas.

It was a great-grandson of Li Yüan's, Li Ssü-hsün and his son Li Chao-tao, who opened the long series of illustrious artists of Imperial lineage, which lasted from dynasty to dynasty down to the end of art and dynasties in the iconoclasm of today. Li Chao-tao wrought so admirably, he could think of competing with that giant among artists, Wu Tao tze, the aureoles of whose saints were whirlwinds, whose hells were clarion calls to regeneration, whose landscapes were gates into infinitude. But all this marvellous blossoming belongs to the eighth and ninth centuries, when loyalty to the dynasty and obedience to its laws had become a habit, and security a practical certainty.

In June, 618, when Li Yüan mounted the Dragon Throne in Ch'ang-an, loyalty had still to be bought, obedience still to be enforced, security still to be fought for. Marching, shouting, manœuvring, organizing, those were the immediately urgent and so multitudinously pressing duties, there was no room for anything else. The hard age died hard.

Li Yüan was only one among many, all claiming to berightful heirs of the Suis. These were completely broken, and it looked as if their achievement, the unification of China, were completely broken also. That appearance, however, was deceptive.

Below the noise and fury of personal animosities and re-surging provincialisms, a deep undercurrent flowed steadily towards union. Yang Chien's work could be temporarily forgotten, it could not be destroyed. The conditions which had favoured it still existed more actively than ever, pressure from the Turks on, even within the frontiers, disgust of the bulk of the people with the wholly meaningless and excessively burdensome rivalries of its self-constituted leaders, an earnest endeavour on the part of the intellectuals to obtain the political conditions in which the civic virtues taught by K'ung Tzū could be freely practised.

In rebuilding a united Empire Yang Chien overlooked the value of this imponderable element. He remained content to base his power, as the small dynasties had done before him, solely on the strength of the army. Far from rallying the scholars, those loyal champions of a centralized China, to his side, as he might easily have done, he allowed his Buddhist proclivities to blind his judgment to the extent of grievously offending them. In 600 he issued an edict punishing the destruction of a single Buddhist image with death, and the following year he suppressed the Confucian schools throughout the empire, with the exception of the palace Academy. Even there the number of students was reduced to seventy.

It was this illiberal despotism quite as much as his son's extravagance, which caused the downfall of his house. The T'angs, taught by his mistakes, realized the necessity of rallying all the best elements of the population to the support of their new power. To owe it only to their troops would have been particularly perilous, since these were largely recruited among barbarians, whose obedience needed careful watching.

Therefore the moment the purely military part of conquest had been completed, and all the rivals, the Li Mis, the Wang Shih-ch'ungs and about a dozen others, had one by one been run to death and deprived of head and power, a task which



it took six years of bitter fighting to accomplish, Li Yüan proceeded in state to the palace Academy and offered solemn libations to the Sage. He probably did so on the advice of his son Li Shih-min, to whom, as he said himself, the doctrines of Yao and Shun, Chou Kung and K'ung Tzū were what air is to birds and water to fish.

When he became Emperor he surrounded himself with scholars, added over 1,000 rooms to the palace Academy, increased the number of resident students to 3,000, of non-resident ones to 8,000, appointed professors to teach his guards letters, entrusted a committee of the most learned with the task of revising the numerous and frequently confusing commentaries on the Classics and compiling one standard interpretation for general use in government schools and for the public examinations. A proper understanding of the moral principles and of the literary beauty of Classics was to be the only road to office, the age of ignorant barbarism was definitely closed and that of culture inaugurated.

Li Yüan, however, only half belonged to the latter and was inclined to use his position mainly for the multiplication of concubines, horses, hounds and palaces. He seems besides to have been easily frightened.

When, for the third time, the Turks, forgetful of former friendliness, invaded the Wei valley and the menacing stream of their cavalry could be seen from the towers of Ch'ang-an, Li Yüan in alarm began to listen to the pusillanimous who told him that, since it was the riches of the capital which attracted these dangerous intruders, prudence clearly suggested that the Imperial residence should be moved to a safer place, Ch'ang-an abandoned and burnt to the ground. But Li Shih-min opposed this cowardly advice.

He rightly saw that a new and feebly-rooted dynasty could not afford the slightest loss of military prestige. He had fought the Turks before, on one occasion attacking their camp in the dead of night in driving rain. He knew that, far from their base, they were no real match for the slower but heavier forces of the Chinese, provided these were handled with skill and determination.

Once he had induced his father to stand up against Yang Ti's tyranny, promising him the throne. That promise had been kept. Now he promised to rid him of the Turkish peril. And again he kept his promise.

Ch'ang-an was neither evacuated nor taken. Instead, as in the days of the Hans, a peace meeting took place between nomads and Chinese on the bridge of the Wei, a white horse was

sacrificed, oaths of alliance and friendship sworn on its blood, marriages concluded and for a time at least peaceful trade relations substituted for war. Trade was particularly needed by China, so drained of its live stock after six years of civil disturbance, complicated with Turkish and Tibetan razzias, that men had to do the work of oxen and be harnessed to the plough. The nomads, on the contrary, had an abundance of cattle and when peacefully inclined, were not loth to exchange it for the rolls of silk they had learned to prize and which, with Li Shih-min guarding the frontiers, it was getting dangerous to steal.

All these triumphs of Li Shih-min's benefited the country, but they infuriated his brothers. The eldest, Li Chien Cheng, heir-apparent, and the younger, Li Yuan Ki, envious of such superiority, attempted to poison the man with whom they could not compete. But he, most disobligingly, brought up the fatal dose.

They then decided to slay him at a farewell banquet to be given on the eve of the general Yuan Ki's departure on a military expedition against the Turks. Forewarned, Li Shih-min waylaid and shot his would-be assassins at the Palace Gate. A violent deed, yet probably the only way out of danger in that world still electric with the passions of years of brutal turmoil.

The father, whose weakness was largely responsible for this tragic conclusion of a family quarrel, now grew afraid of this terrible son of his who seemed to stop at nothing. Precipitately he appointed him Prince Imperial, with almost unlimited powers and in less than two months' time abdicated outright, retiring into obscurity, probably with a sufficient allowance of concubines, horses, and falcons to keep him amused, for he lived on till 635, completing seventy years of age.

Li Shih-min was now the sole ruler of the Empire he had won. Having from his youth upwards been actively mixed in the practical handling of political questions, he knew by what means the difficult task of rebuilding a peaceful, prosperous China united within, and respected without, could be accomplished. These were a clear and open mind in the ruler, able advisers and administrators, a contented people, an efficient army, sound finance.

He was fortunate in already finding in office a group of able men, who had largely contributed to the triumph of the T'angs. Foremost among these stood Wei Chêng, poet, scholar, statesman, sagacious, energetic, fearless, never hesitating to let his Imperial master know the truth, however



unpalatable, either about current events or about his own actions. When he died in 643 the Emperor mourned and said:

"Men use copper as a mirror, at which to adjust their raiment; the Ancients to understand the trend of policies, a fellow-man to find out what it is wise to do or to leave undone. With Wei Chêng gone I have lost one of my three mirrors."

Then there was Ch'ang-sun Wu-chi, whose sister Li Shih-min had married, staunch comrade-in-arms during the early days of fighting, a man of such sterling probity, he was eminently fitted for the high posts to which his brother-in-law, now Emperor, called him; Ch'u Sui-liang, noted for the elegance of his calligraphy, and above all, P'ei Chü, who had acquired immortal fame by collecting an abundance of information about the many foreign nations who came to trade at Ch'ang je in Kansuh, at that time an important exchange mart for Chinese and Western goods, and to which Sui Yang Ti had appointed him Trade Commissioner in 607. At Tai Tsung's accession he was a very old man with the rich experience of a long and strenuous life spent in the public service. Of him Wei Chêng wrote:

"P'ei Chü thoroughly studied the canonical scriptures and the historical works. He possessed great natural ability besides always being full of energy and activity; day and night he laboured. For many years he was engaged in government affairs, and though living in disturbed and dangerous times, he preserved his intellectual purity and his conscientious method of work. It was he who induced several western rulers to pay homage to the Chinese Court."

He had a way of treating men which exceeded their highest expectations. Consequently all, down to the humblest servant, were devoted to him. He was one of the first embodiments of that renaissance of the great Han officials, men of such intellectual versatility, they were simultaneously scholars, poets, soldiers, statesmen, administrators, magistrates, from now onwards frequently, also painters, mystics, Buddhist philosophers. To them the greatness of the T'ang period was due far more than to the merits of the dynasty.

Its real founder though, Li Shih-min, as Emperor called the Sublime Ancestor, T'ai Tsung, was a man of such commanding genius, he was able to hold the far-flung provinces and dependencies of the Chinese Empire together for about three centuries by the glamour his greatness cast over all his descendants on the Dragon Throne.

What attracted him to P'ei Chü was the latter's forward foreign policy, a subject on which he evidently consulted him

freely, for in almost every particular, including the only unsuccessful part of the programme, the attacks on Korea, he carried out the ideas of the aged Sui statesman. Of course, these embodied a policy which flows so naturally from the geographical position, the economical needs and the intellectual reach of China, that, from the days of the Hans to those of Chien Lung, it inevitably reappears whenever the country possesses enough momentum to enforce it. To acquire that momentum and to devise a system by which it could be maintained was therefore T'ai Tsung's first care.

He divided the country into ten administrative districts, placed under governors carefully selected and carefully supervised. He would periodically send a commission of inquiry round to inspect and report on their behaviour and kept a record of their deeds and misdeeds under their names written on screens in his apartments. Ancient traditions of loyalty and honour were re-created among the officials by several methods, namely by limiting appointments as far as possible to men who could interpret the Classics, for which purpose the examination system and bestowal of degrees to successful candidates elaborated by the Suis were further developed ; by the Emperor himself setting an example of scholarship and active understanding of the eternally applicable principles of the Sages ; by encouraging honesty rather than flattery, the Censors were allowed to attend Cabinet Councils and to express their opinions freely,—finally by rewarding faithful service with special honours. Like the Hans in a Hall of their Palace, so T'ai Tsung in the Mist Climbing Rotunda, hung the portraits of distinguished public servants, often painted by as skilful an artist as Yen Li-pên.

The administration of justice was also brought into somewhat closer correspondence with its name. Though rather averse to Buddhism, at least in its social aspect, T'ai Tsung was nevertheless deeply imbued with the tender regard for suffering with which the gospel of Buddha had definitely enriched the thought of the world. The harsh code of the Suis was modified in the direction of mercy in as many as ninety-two cases, removed from the list of crimes punishable by death, and seventy-one cases in which lifelong exile was reduced to exile for a limited term. The cruel punishment of flogging on the back which often ended fatally was also suppressed.

One day in spring, when inspecting a prison, T'ai Tsung was moved to pity for those condemned to death at the annual autumn executions. On their word of honour to deliver themselves up again then, he allowed them all to return home. Not



one broke his word, which remarkable honesty he rewarded by pardoning them all.

To prevent ill-considered executions he ordered important death sentences to be submitted to him five times for two days on end by the metropolitan, and three times by the provincial judges before they could be carried out. This right of appeal to the highest authority was probably not merely humanitarian but aimed at keeping a restraining hand over the subordinate courts.

Still T'ai Tsung undoubtedly had a keen sense of the immense responsibility involved in the destruction of a human life. On the days of public executions neither meat nor wine was served at his table, no music heard in his palace. The skeletons left bleaching on the plains of Liao T'ung since Yang Ti's Korean campaigns, the still more numerous bones six years of civil war had scattered over the fields of China, he had reverently gathered and buried.

The fear to fall short of what Heaven demanded and what the people hoped was always with him, and he never wearied warning his son that the people were like water which carries a good boat but engulfs a leaky one, and that princes, like trees, only grow straight by timely restraint. Simplicity, that twin sister of economy, was the fashion at his Court, and whatever lapses into extravagant building and decorating did occur, were not persisted in, when such outspoken ministers as Wei Chêng pointed out the hidden peril they contained. For, still surrounded on all sides by remains of the magnificence which had cost Yang Ti his life, it was easy to frighten the Emperor back into the frugality he really prized. Twice the number of palace women was greatly reduced and in one of his new buildings, the Jade Blossom Hall, all the roofs were thatched, except that of his bedroom, for which he indulged in the luxury of tiles.

When his wife the Empress Chang-sun was lying on her death-bed she begged to be given a simple tomb among the hills and that the vessels and figures buried with her were not to be fashioned of jade and gold, only of plain wood and clay.

She was a woman of great sense and considerable culture, even writing a book called "Advice to Women," illustrated by many historical examples. The advice she gave her husband was always on the side of moderation and justice. The last wish she expressed was that he would keep his ears closed to the praises of flatterers and open to the reproofs of the righteous, that he should surround himself with men of merit and refrain from idling and hunting.

The Emperor mourned her deeply and from a tower he built for the purpose would gaze at her grave for hours. But Wei Chêng, the stern old statesman, did not believe rulers had a right to indulge in private grief. So, obedient to the dead Empress's last wish, the reproof was accepted and the tower demolished.

It certainly was not the time for lonely meditation. Strong military powers were condensing in the West. In the south-west corner, the valleys and lofty plateaus of Tibet, the mighty hand of Srong tsan Gam-po was welding the scattered tribes of the former Kiangs, the nomad shepherds, into a nation in arms, extending the orbit of its power as far as Szechuan and Nepal.

In the extreme west of Asia, the huge Arab upheaval caused by the ferment of the new militant monotheism preached by Mahomet, was beginning to shake the old map of the world to pieces.

Already four years before the death of the Empress, in 632, Persia, weakened by unhappy wars with Eastern Romans and Western Turks, torn by the usual outcrop of such wars, internal dissension, had been invaded by these fresh and far more terrible enemies, thirsting to convert mankind to Islam at the point of the sword, or at least to make it subservient to their new and tempestuous road to salvation.

Overwhelmed by the vanguard of the most recent, the last representatives of the oldest culture appealed to China for help. But T'ai Tsung, though always friendly to the Persians, was not willing to get involved in their quarrels.

In 642 the great and bitterly fought battle of Nehawend made the last Sassanid King a landless, hunted fugitive, and his country the vassal of the Arab caliphate.

His son Firduz, recognized King of Persia at the Chinese Court, probably merely out of courtesy, ended his days there in the following reign and was given permission to build a Zoroastrian temple at Ch'ang-an in addition to the one already erected in that city in 621. Lo yang also possessed one dating back to the Wei dynasty. Indeed, regular intercourse between China and Persia was fully two centuries old and seems always to have been of a friendly and mutually beneficial nature.

That this highly civilized power was replaced by the bigoted, fiercely efficient military organization of the Moslems was by no means advantageous to China, though the resulting danger did drive many of the small principalities of Central Asia into gladly accepting her overlordship as a far humaner yoke than



that of the Koran. Against its eastward thrust, the excellent civil and military administration of the early T'angs and the inner strength derived from the Confucian schools formed so impregnable a barrier, that even after the narrow law of Mahomet had wiped out the all-embracing one of Buddha among the races of what is now called Turkestan, it made neither conquests nor conversions in the Middle Kingdom.

The fairly numerous Mahommedan population which did come to live within its borders, more especially in the southern and western commercial centres, were foreign merchants attracted by the profits of a flourishing trade ; also, since the latter half of the eighth century, soldier colonists whom the Khalif had sent to the assistance of the T'ang Emperor against the rebel, An Lu Shan. When peace was restored they were endowed with military fiefs in the western marches, free of all burden except that of watch and ward.

Another danger which T'ai Tsung successfully kept at bay, was the old inherited one of the Turks. Having often fought them as a prince, it was one of his first acts as Emperor to curb their power from which his country had suffered so much. In this he was greatly assisted by the folly of the Khan of the Northern Turks, whose tyranny drove several of his vassal tribes, among them the Uighurs, into open revolt.

They defeated Tu Li, the general whom the Khan sent against them, and when as a punishment the enraged Khan had Tu Li whipped, the latter fled to Ch'ang-an with all his men, seeking a less choleric master.

Thereupon T'ai Tsung launched an army against the Khan, whom a second group of tribes and chieftains immediately deserted, going over to the T'angs. Beaten, chased from deserts to mountains, the Khan fled to an allied chief who, proving only a fair-weather friend, delivered him to the Chinese.

The Emperor was a generous victor, gave him the rank of honorary general of the life guards and allowed him to end his days peacefully in Ch'ang-an.

Many Turks who had voluntarily surrendered, were embodied in the guards and proved a valuable acquisition. Together with their families their numbers amounted to 10,000. Another 10,000 had fallen in the war, 150,000 been made prisoners, 100,000 submitted. What was left of the Northern Turks after these deductions dispersed among the Western Turks and other adjacent tribes.

A patriotic remnant wrote its grief over this humiliation on hard stone near the shores of a lonely lake west of the Orkhon River, lamenting :

“ Khans without wisdom,  
Khans without valour sat on the throne,  
Their officers too lacked courage and sense.  
And because of the iniquity of nobles and people,  
And because the Chinese flattered and fooled them,  
And younger brothers and elder plotted the ones against the other,  
And quarrels arose between the followers of the people and those  
of the lords,  
Therefore the Turks brought about the break-up of their Kingdom,  
The ruin of their Khan.  
Their sons became serfs to the people of China,  
Their daughters its slaves.  
Stripped of their Turkish titles and honours,  
Decked with titles of Chinese officials,  
Subjected to the Emperor of China  
Fifty years they gave him their strength and their toil.”

The Western Turks, fearful lest a similar fate should befall them, sent obsequious embassies and presents and definitely turned the direction of their growth away from China and towards the West, where a great destiny was awaiting them.

A further result of the subjugation of the Northern Turks was the voluntary acknowledgment of Chinese suzerainty by practically all the principalities sitting astride the great trade- and pilgrim-routes through the Tarim Basin and along the slopes of the Tien Shan.

Once though, in 640, Turfan, one of the most important, took to highway robbery, attacking the caravans passing through its territory, thinking this more immediately profitable than assisting the Son of Heaven in the maintenance of law and order. Summoned to answer at the Court of Ch'ang-an for this falling away from grace, the Turfan chieftain answered :

“ To the hawk the sky, to the pheasant the bush, to the cat the houses, to the rat holes, to me the Tarim ! ”

But he was wrong, the Tarim passed into the hands of T'ai Tsung, who sent two generals in command of an army to clear this district of brigands.

Turfan was made the administrative centre of the Chinese western protectorate and renamed Si Chou, West District. This one successful expedition raised the great Han Empire triumphantly out of its grave.

The handling of the new and therefore rather truculent power of the Tibetans presented another delicate problem which needed all T'ai Tsung's brilliant diplomacy for a satisfactory solution. It even involved a passage of arms between Chinese and Tibetan forces. The former won, but T'ai Tsung had the sense not to over-estimate the extent of his victory and to prefer a comparatively lasting friendship to what could never



be more than a temporary humiliation of a powerful neighbour. He therefore granted Srong tsan Gam-po's request for a T'ang Princess, and gave him his own daughter the Princess Wên ch'êng in marriage. She brought with her to her new mountain home Buddhist images, and books, and together with his other wife, Bribstun, an Indian princess, contributed to his enthusiastic acceptance of Buddhism and of other elements of civilization, like writing, for which he turned to India, and the improvement of national customs, for which he studied China. The building of palaces, temples and cities, he copied from both countries.

So Tibetan embassies came to Ch'ang-an and may have been seen in its streets elbowing envoys from Kashgar, Samarkand, Persia, Japan, Annam, Tonking, Korea, Constantinople, even of a strange tribe, the Kirghiz, from unknown distances on Siberian rivers, tall, red-haired, green-eyed according to the annalist's not very flattering description. The embassy from Constantinople brought ruby glass and powdered gold, that from the South elephants, that from the near West the swift horses which the T'ang Emperors prized as highly as the Hans had done before them. One from Bactria even presented a lion, so rare a creature T'ai Tsung had it painted by the clever brush of Yen Li-pên. Pictures of tribute-bearers became the fashion, for both the tribute and the bearers fascinated Chinese eyes, hungry for the exotic and the new.

Yet another traveller from the West, either from Persia or from Syria, the Nestorian priest Olo Pen—

"A man of great virtue attracted by the brilliant radiance, perceiving the harmony of the zephyrs, braved all difficulties and dangers and brought his holy book. In the ninth year of Chêng Kuan, he arrived in Ch'ang-an. The Emperor sent his Prime Minister with an escort to the western suburb in order to receive the visitors.

"The books were translated in the halls of the Library; their doctrines examined in the private Palace. Understanding that they were just and true an edict allowed them to be spread and preached."

A wonderful light radiates from this edict issued by T'ai Tsung in 638:

"Truth bears not one name only.  
The sage is not one person only.  
Religions vary with the countries.  
Their influence benefits all beings.

The Persian monk O-lo-pen has come from afar to present the doctrine of his books to the Capital. Examining it, we found it profound and peaceful, producing the good and the essential. Let it spread freely within the Empire. Let those in charge of religious matters forthwith build a monastery for 21 monks in the quarter of Justice and Peace."

The Nestorian tablet, which a bishop of the royal city of Balkh erected in 781 in Ch'ang-an goes on to say that under Kao Tsung, T'ai Tsung's son and successor, every prefecture possessed a temple of the "Luminous Doctrine," as the Nestorians, though anathematized as heretics by Byzantine Christianity, confidently called their religion. Unconsciously mellowed by Buddhist and Taoist ideas, its white-robed priests who "let their beards grow because they preserved relations with the outer world, and tonsured their heads because they were free from inner passions," gained a certain amount of influence, and under Su Tsung, one of their dignitaries "in brocade vestments and violet chasuble, mild and benevolent, come to China from afar," was given a post in the Palace and then in the Army, probably as adviser to the great general Kuo Tzu I, who repaired and enlarged several old Nestorian Temples, and once a year entertained Nestorian monks for no less than fifty days. Most likely he treated Buddhist and Taoist monks equally well, as T'ai Tsung's comprehensive tolerance never ceased to be the fashion among the best minds in China.

Only, as in all countries, it occasionally happened that the best minds were not in control.

Then persecutions would occur: under the Empress Wu, Buddhists attacked the Luminous sectarians with "calumny and violence"; under Jui Tsung obscure scholars overwhelmed them with contempt and ridicule. However, Hsüan Tsung "raised their altar again" and gave them 100 rolls of silk.

The sun of imperial favour continued to warm them till 845 when being suddenly and quite unjustifiably withdrawn, the inner lights of the Luminous Doctrine did not prove strong enough to continue shining; its monks were secularized, its cloisters deserted, and the now world-famous Nestorian Tablet left buried beneath the rubble of its ruined temples for over seven centuries.

This melancholy end was providentially hidden from the eyes of T'ai Tsung. When on the New Year's Day his palace was thronged with the chieftains of all the surrounding tribes and with the envoys from far distant countries, all come to offer homage and congratulations to this real Son of Heaven, then he well could say:

"Han Wu Ti made war for thirty years yet failed to accomplish what has been achieved now and that solely by kindness."

It would happen that tribes submitted of their own free will, asking for the boon of Chinese administration. Undoubtedly one reason for his succeeding by peaceful means where the Hans had to employ force was the spread of Buddhism during





CHUNG K'UEI (8TH CENTURY)  
DEVOURER OF DEVILS



KUO TZU-I (8TH CENTURY)  
FAMOUS T'ANG GENERAL





the intervening centuries. Its softening and sweetening influence on the Central Asian races and the unifying, harmonizing effect of its ecclesiastical organization on the most distant and diverse regions prepared the way for such a common meeting-ground as the T'ang Capital. To this must be added T'ai Tsung's profound understanding of K'ung Tzŭ's great dream of a world-empire held together by nothing but the centripetal force of a widely acceptable yet unfalteringly lofty ideal of human conduct. It was the source from which he derived his policy of broad-minded tolerance, allowing foreign communities to build their own places of worship in his country and of accepting the sons and brothers of foreign rulers to be enrolled as pupils in the Imperial Academy. The result was the spread of the deeply civilizing influence of Chinese Wisdom over large parts of Asia. If Arab Mahommedanism had not raised a barrier of the sharpest steel against any westward expansion, it might even have sent some rays of light into the darkness, which, as decadent Rome's last legacy, was at that time brooding over Europe. Of course, it wasn't all light and harmony in Eastern Asia either. Lapses into insubordination occurred among some of the small rulers in the Tarim and were repressed probably with more firmness than gentleness by one of the Northern Turkish generals who had entered the service of the Great Emperor.

In 645, for reasons now hard to understand, but which cannot have been frivolous, since they appeared cogent to such experienced statesmen as P'ei Chŭ and T'ai Tsung, war with Korea was decided on. The assassination of the King by an usurper, Ko Su Wen, and the latter's refusal to receive T'ai Tsung's envoy, furnished the immediate pretext. The driving motive, however, seems to have been the desire to wipe out the disgrace of Sui Yang Ti's defeat, which rankled in the heart of T'ai Tsung, by no means irresponsible to the lure of military glory. Fang Hsŭan-ling, his oldest and ablest minister since the death of Wei Chêng, advised him strongly against what he condemned as an unjustifiable act of aggression, by which the blessedness of peace was rashly broken and "innocent soldiers driven into a multitude of swords and spears."

T'ai Tsung, the warrior in him thoroughly roused, preferred to listen to those who insisted on the need of chastising the Korean regicide. Troops were levied, Chinese and friendly auxiliaries from north-western protectorates, an army of at least 100,000 men, both infantry and cavalry, mobilized, war junks equipped, the Crown Prince put in charge of the government during the Emperor's absence in the field. So great was

his keenness for the stirring life of a campaign, he himself wrote the declaration of war and with his own hands strapped his raincoat to his saddle, when he started from Ting Chou at the head of his battalions in the third month of 646.

Perhaps owing to his inspiring presence the beginning of the expedition went well for China. Cities were taken, battles won, thousands of Koreans killed or captured. But then winter set in, which comes early and fiercely to those parts. The rivers froze, the grass perished, food ran short for men and beasts. The important city of Anshih would not open its gates, though attacked day and night by all the force and cunning of Chinese siege machinery, and in spite of the Korean army which hastened to its relief being completely beaten. T'ai Tsung's luck forsook him before those obstinate walls. He ordered the homeward march to begin, just only in time.

Even so, snowstorms, frost and hunger overtook many regiments and 80 per cent. of the horses perished. So did 50,000 of the Koreans, dragged away from their devastated cities as prisoners. The remaining 14,000 were to be distributed among their captors, but T'ai Tsung, taking pity on their melancholy fate, bought them off the Chinese soldiers and set them free. This and the taking of ten Korean towns was the sum total in solid returns for T'ai Tsung's vast expenditure of men, material, time and energy.

Nevertheless, he ordered more preparations for a fresh campaign and though this was stopped by his death, twenty years later, his son took up his project and brought it to a successful issue.

Korea was drawn into the orbit of Chinese sovereignty, her King taken to Ch'ang-an and presented a humble prisoner of war to the tomb of his country's old adversary, the great and still formidable T'ai Tsung, whose soul maybe was then pacified and comforted. But at the time, the comparative failure of the Korean expedition throws something of a gloom over the last years of his otherwise brilliant reign.

His physical vigour began to give out, the projected solemn thanksgiving service on the height of T'ai Shan was cancelled, he fled from his town palace to the purer air of a retreat in the hills, to the south-east of Ch'ang-an, begun by his father and now enlarged and renamed the Turquoise blue Hall. He was troubled about the intellectual ability of the prince he had selected as his successor instead of his eldest son, who having proved cruel to his subordinates, and over-fond of frivolous music, beautiful women, and licentious eunuchs, had drifted into treasonable plots for which he was degraded, imprisoned



and finally exiled to Szechuan. There he died, cursing either his folly or his ill-luck.

The second Crown Prince had been chosen for the gentleness of his disposition, but T'ai Tsung, reviewing the experiences of his own life, realized that something more than gentleness was wanted in the ruler of an Empire.

"Slowly built up, quickly destroyed," "hard to obtain and easy to lose," as he expressed it in the book of precepts for Emperors which he wrote for the instruction of his son.

Nevertheless, when a severe attack of dysentery laid him low and he knew the last summons was not far off he faced it serenely. For he had the clear, and as the time proved, the fully justified confidence that the work he had accomplished was too well wrought to disappear with him, that the organization which he and the group of able men around him had set up was planned so wisely it would continue to function years after their deaths and transmit the impulse of their great ideals onward through the flow of time to distant generations.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE EMPRESS WU

**I**T was indeed a glorious age of human history the rising of which into concrete existence had brought T'ai Tsung and his ministers to the front and for the growth of which they in turn so largely helped to contribute the most favourable conditions. An alert age, keen to understand the world around it, and a religious age anxious to be worthy of eternal life. Hence it produced on the one side a reformed calendar, improved medical practice, and above all well-compiled maps and books of travel and geography. The Prince of Wei, one of T'ai Tsung's sons, presented him with such a work ; merchants, pilgrims, ambassadors brought back much valuable information and a special Department was put in charge of maps in which for administrative and military purposes the Government also took a practical interest.

At the end of the eighth century the famous geographer, Kia Tan, made the first accurately measured and divided map of the whole of the Chinese Empire and its neighbours, marking roads and places from far Japan to the yet more remote shores of the Caspian Sea. It had a breadth of thirty-three and a width of thirty feet.

The same century produced a clever mechanical device, a celestial sphere moved hydraulically, which, marking one revolution a day, showed the movements of the sun, the moon, and the constellations.

On the other side the new spirit sought an expression for its spiritual longings in a revival of the old indigenous cult, half-buried under a flood of Buddhist innovations. T'ai Tsung satisfied the desire, allowing even the smallest village to erect altars to the Guardian Spirits of the Fields and Harvests, a privilege hitherto reserved to imperial officials. Further, a reformed Board of Rites saw to the regular performance of the ancient sacrifices to the Mountain and River Gods. Kao Tsung worshipped on the height of T'ai Shan, renewing a ceremony mysterious and holy with old age and all the symbolism



of man's first conscious contact with the elusive power of the Divine.

Buddhism, enriched by many further translations of its scriptures, though beginning to be coloured with Tantrism, continued to be one of the leading influences, and to add the peace and beauty of its monasteries to the lonely grandeur of the hills. In this Taoism copied it with flattering faithfulness, but otherwise there was too much rivalry between them for Imperial and popular patronage, to permit much real friendliness.

The T'angs, following their exalted ancestor's example, mostly favoured Taoism, sometimes to the point of excessive partiality. They even claimed direct descent from its greatest figure, the venerable Lao Tzŭ himself. Worldly success swelled those pretensions to occult power, for which mysticism always offers a tempting ground. This wrought a good deal of harm, but on the other hand the deep philosophy of the old Sage and of his disciple Chüang Tzŭ proved a constant source of spiritual invigoration to the best minds, including the devoutest Buddhist monks.

That T'ai Tsung's and his great ministers' work was virtually fool-proof came to be tested in the very next reign and stood many other severe tests remarkably well for almost sixteen generations, in spite of the fact that T'ai Tsung was by no means fortunate in his descendants. A strain of physical debility with resultant lack of will-power and exaggerated faith in the life-giving properties of drugs runs through them. With the exception of Ming Huang and Hsüan Tsung, who earned the name of a new T'ai Tsung, not one of them stands out with any record of substantial achievement.

Even Ming Huang's fame, as the patron of China's greatest artists and poets, is sadly dimmed by the irresponsible laziness of his later years. As to Hsüan Tsung's return to the traditional T'ang policy of justice, tolerance and the careful selection of officials among the educated, it was brought to an abrupt close by his folly in poisoning himself with one of those crazy concoctions, called drugs of immortality, brewed by pretenders to Taoist holiness, really mere dangerous throwbacks to primitive witch doctors, who traded on the gullibility of that age much as advertisers of quack medicines trade on ours. No less than four T'ang Emperors shortened their lives by their passionate desire to prolong it indefinitely.

Another, Shun Tsung, was stricken with dumbness and for seven months sat on the Dragon Throne clothed with supreme power, yet incapable of moving his own tongue. Then the

paralysis spread to other parts of his body and this mute ghost of an emperor abdicated, and shortly afterwards passed away to the utter silence of the grave.

Four T'ang Emperors were murdered, two through no guilt of their own, in the last years of the dynasty, crushed by the accumulation of disasters which brought about that tragic end.

Of the remaining two the one, Ching Tsung, was strangled in the dark by a gang of eunuchs whom he had enraged by his drunken violence; the other, Chung Tsung, was poisoned by his wife the Empress Wei, afraid of being found out in her amorous escapades.

Women altogether played a sinister part in the lives of the T'angs. The noble example of T'ai Tsung's wife was found too strenuous by the frivolous young creatures who trailed their perfumes and their satins through the hibiscus groves and bright pavilions of the Imperial palace. It was lucky if they only craved for pleasure. Several sought power also, often impelled, not only by their own ambition, but by the greed of their clan eager not to lose the chance for making its fortunes by the slippery method of back-stairs influence.

Sometimes the unhappy Emperor at his wits' end to know how to escape their exactions, would resort to the heroic measure of clearing wagon-loads of these pretty tormentors right out. It would happen though, that the pretty ones remained and only ageing ladies mounted the ox-carts waiting at the palace gate to drive them back to their parental homes.

Hsin Tsung sent off no less than 200 cart-loads of superannuated femininity. Tê Tsung, for the sake of economy, also dismissed hundreds of these "beings who open the mouth," together with his father's elephants, hounds, and falcons.

On T'ai Tsung's death, some of his widows were also compulsorily retired, among them the beautiful Wu Chao. The world seemed to have nothing more to offer her, so she turned away from it, cut her hair, and took the vows of a Buddhist nun.

But Kao Tsung's Empress, mad with jealousy of the concubine Hsiao Shu, for whose sake she was woefully neglected, determined to oust this hated rival by supplying her husband with a more attractive companion. Remembering the gossip that, while nursing his father in his last sickness, Kao Tsung's eye had involuntarily lingered on the lovely face of Wu Chao, also tenderly watching the august patient, she took her out of her pious seclusion and brought her back to the sultry atmosphere of the seraglio. The poor Empress thought she



had found a dove meek and docile to her wishes. Too late she realized that a hawk's hunger for blood and power watched behind the humbly drooping eyes of the Buddhist votary. She did indeed rid the Empress of the hated Hsiao Shu, but that favourite had held Kao Tsung merely by a silken thread. The new one bound him in chains which entered his soul, and reduced him to a frightened echo of her softly cooing but terribly determined voice. She began by contriving to throw the blame for the death of her infant daughter whom, with this end in view, she herself had strangled, on to her benefactress the Empress.

Furious, Kao Tsung sent the latter to share Hsiao Shu's prison and decided to divorce her and make the beautiful Wu Chao Empress instead. However, there the laws of filial piety and the right of the elder statesmen to be heard on every important question threatened to balk him. The Empress was of noble birth and had been chosen by T'ai Tsung as a fitting wife for his son. They had knelt together at his death-bed, and he had blessed them and held both their hands in his. To degrade her on a flimsy pretext was an outrage on his father.

The Council of the Elder Statesmen, to whom T'ai Tsung had wisely given a large share of power, unanimously vetoed Kao Tsung's or rather his favourite's scheme.

The two old Councillors, Ch'ang-sun Wu-chi and Ch'u Sui-liang, to whom the dying monarch had entrusted his son, loyal to the beloved dead and to the true interests of his dynasty, were particularly steadfast in their opposition. Neither flattery nor anger had the slightest effect on them, though they well knew it is a perilous undertaking to thwart the desire of a love-blind man.

Unfortunately there was a Judas among them, ready to sacrifice principles to the chance of making his fortune. Into the willing ear of his Imperial Master he dropped the pernicious advice that the consent of the old statesmen was merely a matter of form and courtesy, by no means an unavoidable necessity. Let him do as he pleased in his matrimonial entanglements. The infatuated Emperor thereupon at once set about doing so.

Ch'u Sui-liang was given an appointment in Korea,—a thinly-veiled form of degradation and exile—the lady Wu Chao extolled for her many virtues and created Empress in place of the unfortunate prisoner.

Once though, the Emperor, perhaps feeling troubled about what had been done, went to see his former wife, listened

to her pitiful entreaties to be allowed to see the sun again and the moon.

The new Empress heard of this and without a moment's hesitation or compunction sent assassins to the prison, to put an end to any possibility of rivalry from that quarter.

These wretches executed their foul errand in the very foulest manner. They crushed both the ex-Empress and the ex-concubine into jars, breaking their bones, cutting off their hands and their feet,—the latter atrocity perhaps to prevent the ghosts of the murdered women from pursuing and catching hold of them. In spite of this precaution, they did haunt the palace of the Empress Wu at Ch'ang-an, who consequently prevailed on her husband to make Lo yang his principal residence. There, grievous to relate, she thrived and prospered, gave birth to three sons, made Kao Tsung's attacks of giddiness the excuse for transferring the conduct of government affairs from his feeble hands to her own energetic grip and succeeded in dominating him to such an extent, he at one time actually thought of entirely abdicating in her favour. Only the courageous remonstrance of a Censor saved him from this.

But his most valuable councillor, the loyal friend of his father, and one of the makers of the dynasty, the old statesman Ch'ang-sun Wu-chi, he surrendered to the vindictive claws of his terrible wife, who never rested till on some spurious accusation of treason she had him stripped of all his honours, executed and his whole family exterminated.

Probably she was already then secretly considering the chances of annihilating the Lis and replacing them by her own family the Wus. Her father was created King of T'ai Yüan and with Li Shih-min's old councillors put out of the way in a manner not calculated to encourage conscientious criticism from the remaining ministers, she could fill the most influential posts with her own creatures and relations. Not that she showed the latter any mercy if they dared set their will against hers.

Her own son perished a victim to her fiercely jealous guardianship of her own power. He had been appointed Prince Imperial in place of the one whom the murdered Empress had adopted and was a great favourite of his father's, who probably found relief in the boy's bright companionship from that of his dragon-tempered wife. He had T'ai Tsung's tender heart, quick intelligence and outspoken fearlessness, dangerous qualities at his mother's Court. In a matter of showing mercy to the daughters of her rivals, dead and van-



quished long ago, he had the splendid rashness of standing up against her long continued cruelty. She flew into a rage of fear. With such a son on the throne she could expect nothing but the usual fate of Dowagers, a highly dignified but very absolute retirement.

The thought was unbearable. She found it easier to poison her own child. She then tried a nephew as Prince Imperial, but not finding him sufficiently spineless, replaced him by her second son whose backbone seemed more gelatinous. For the sake of domestic peace Kao Tsung assented to all these doings. Had he not created his great ancestor Lao Tzū "Supreme Unfathomable Original," himself the "Great Celestial Emperor," Wu Hou the "Celestial Empress" and had the people not called them the two Sages?

After this it was not surprising that his head began to swell, and that his mental blindness spread to his physical eyes. An operation restored his sight, but only temporarily. Darkness fell on him again, this time followed by death.

Wu Hou was a widow, her son Shu Tsung mounted the throne. Being already twenty-eight years old he expected to be Emperor in practice as well as in theory.

He had forgotten the Dowager. At the very first sign of independent volition she convoked the ministers, called the guard to arms and summoned the Emperor to her frowning presence. He was declared unworthy of his lofty office. In vain he pleaded he had meant no harm; he was banished to so distant and well-guarded a residence in the Han Valley, he knew he was a prisoner whom it behoved to keep very quiet, lest he should be made to disappear altogether.

There he vegetated till age began to pare his Mother's claws and those who had cowered before her took heart again and ventured to defy her. But for fourteen years this tigress reigned far more autocratically than the strongest Emperor had ever dreamt of doing.

To save appearances she did place her third son Jui Tsung on the throne so abruptly emptied, and he, taught by the experience of his two elder brothers, was as good at meekly folding his hands as his father had been before him. Even when she went the length of almost exterminating his Li relations, and replacing his ancestral tablets by hers, changing his family name of Li to Wu, and that of the dynasty from T'ang to Chou, her father's principality, his hands still remained meekly folded, and his mouth prudently shut.

Nevertheless, irritated at even this pale shadow of an authority at her side, she reduced him to the rank of a Prince

Imperial, and proclaimed herself sole and only Emperor, it would not have been kind to ask by the grace of whom.

Any attempt at opposition to such high-handed proceedings was nipped in the bud by prison, torture, execution. She kept Lo yang petrified with fear by a well-organized system of spying and delation. Liberal rewards were paid to the meanest creature volunteering to bring accusations, true or otherwise, against those she hated, and her powers of hating were enormous. Consequently false witnesses soon swarmed as plentiful as wasps and as ready to sting the most innocent. To render their work easier, a certain Wu Pao Kia conceived the bright idea of putting up in all public squares copper boxes with a slit, into which signed or anonymous letters could be dropped in perfect safety. Wu Hou gladly adopted this device. The executioner was busier than ever, even proving his skill on Wu Pao Kia himself, accused of treason in a letter dropped by some enemy into one of his own copper boxes.

More than thirty Li Princes perished. Jui Tsung's wife, suspected of sorcery, was murdered. Jui Tsung himself fell under suspicion. Fortunately An Chin-ts'ang, who was an official in the Ministry of Rites and seems to have had some moderating influence on the Empress-Dowager, took his part—not an easy thing to do. But to this Confucianist where loyalty was at stake there was no room for fear. Crying out "Read the Emperor's innocence in my naked heart," he ripped himself open so that his bowels jutted out. It was a terrible sight. Even Wu Hou was moved, or more probably, the commotion aroused warned her she was going too far. Anyhow, she had him nursed back to life by her own physicians, and declared herself convinced of her son's innocence.

At last, having killed or silenced all her real and supposed adversaries, she settled down to the happier task of bestowing sonorous titles on her wonderful self, and sumptuous buildings on Heaven and on the Lord Buddha, both of whom, with her conscience perhaps not absolutely at ease, she was anxious to propitiate.

Already during her husband's lifetime, in pursuance of the T'ang policy of a return to ancient national forms of worship, the plan of building a Ming Tang had been mooted. But the experts failed to agree on which was the correct tradition to follow in its construction, just as they had done under Sui Wên Ti. Evidently no Ming Tang had been built since the great days of the Hans.

Greatness having returned to China it was fitting to commemorate the event by a temple hall symbolical of the old



priestly functions of the Son of Heaven, and his intermediary position between Heaven and men as executor of the Divine Will. But fate was in a humorous mood and decreed the Ming Tang should be put up by a most diabolical woman and through the agency of her chief favourite, the Buddhist monk Huai I.

She had installed him as Abbot of the famous White Horse Temple in Lo yang and was so much under his influence the worldly-wise crawled before this Father Confessor almost as abjectly as they did before Wu Hou herself.

The Ming Tang of his designing had three stories, the lower dedicated to the four seasons, the second to the twelve signs of the zodiac, the third to the twenty-four Ki. A golden phoenix ten feet high crowned the pinnacle of the domed roofs, nine gigantic dragons coiled around them. The whole building reached a height of 249 feet.

But Huai I's architectural experiments were to soar still higher, culminating in a Temple of Heaven of no less than five stories, the third already loftier than the Ming Tang. Further, a monumental bronze column was erected in front of the Palace to draw the attention of Gods and men to the virtues of Wu Hou, which it must be admitted they otherwise might easily have overlooked. Ten million tons of metal went to its making. Another 560,700 lb. of copper were used for casting nine immense urns, replicas of the famous ones of Yü, decorated with views of the hills and rivers and the natural products of the different provinces to which they belonged and each capable of holding 12,000 bushels of grain.

Even these did not exhaust her craving for copper. A giant statue of Buddha was to be cast in massive bronze and every monk and every nun was expected to contribute one cash a day for this noble object. Then there was a holocaust of oxen with whose blood an image reaching a height of 200 feet was painted crimson.

Finally, in token of her investiture as the Sage, the Sacred Sovereign Lord of the Golden Wheel, this self-made divinity had a huge disc of gold hung up over her throne.

An obliging monk, deciphering the cryptic meaning of the Sutra of the Great Cloud, had discovered that Buddha's promise to a Deva that before entering Buddhahood he would be born once more on earth in the body of a woman and rule a large empire clearly applied to Wu Hou. She was nothing less than an incarnation of Maitreya, the coming Buddha.

Could mortal words be strung together in a sufficient number of superlatives even remotely to express such greatness? She was the "Light irradiating the void," the "Superior of

all the ancient heroes and heroines, the Allwise, the Holy, the Divine Empress Mother, the Great, the Saintly Sovereign Lord, Heaven's Mandatory of the Wheel of Gold." And she dwelt in the Hall of Life Everlasting.

Her last title, "the Sublime, the Holy, the August Sovereign Lord of Celestial Ordinance," conferred on her by her son Shung Tsung when the T'ang party replaced him on the Throne, must have brought her some consolation for her enforced abdication.

Notwithstanding the godlike omnipotence these titles implied and while still in the full flush of her power, she suffered the painful experience of seeing Huai I's gorgeous Ming Tang go up in flames fanned by a wind which also tore the crimson ox-blood picture to ribbons.

The worst of it was that her revered Huai I himself had started the fire in jealous rage against a doctor who had also won her favour.

Questioned about it, he answered insolently; whereupon, oblivious of her former infatuation, and his ecclesiastical rank, she condemned him to be beaten to death.

And the new Ming Tang she erected, perhaps aided by the advice of the doctor, was higher by forty-five feet than the one the dead favourite had built and burnt.

Being of a pious disposition she called it the Palace of Celestial Communications.

Her novitiate in the Buddhist nunnery, though it had had no effect whatsoever on her morals, had developed a strong attachment to Buddhist forms of piety, so much so she could see no good in any others. The Nestorian tablet complains of persecutions during her reign and in 688 as many as 1,700 shrines to all manner of divinities not officially recognized were burnt to ashes.

But anything Buddhist was honoured with the most generous devotion. Thus when the famous monk I Ching returned to Lo yang from his twenty-four years' pilgrimage and study in India, the Holy Land of Buddhism, she personally welcomed him at the Great Gate of the East, preceded by the chants and gongs and bells, banners and canopies of a huge procession of monks from all the city temples. She installed him in the Temple for the Transmitting of Buddhist records (Fo Shou chi), and to assist him in the translation of the sacred texts he had brought back, adjoined to him a priest learned in Sanscrit whom she had obtained from Khotan.

Politically her enthusiasm for Buddha ensured her the support of his followers, a numerous, wealthy and most influential



body. This helps to explain her long unbroken lease of power. Also the moment she had silenced opposition to her encroachments, she took care not to antagonize the official class, and kept her hatreds and persecutions within the limits of a personal feud between her own clan of Wu and the Li clan of her sons.

Besides, her keen brain had a genuine appreciation for efficiency, and her imperious temper froze any tendency to insubordination among the provincial governors into instant obedience.

Nor did she allow the army to deteriorate ; on the contrary, under her rule it wiped out the disgrace of the defeat the Tibetans, grown unfriendly to their big neighbour, had inflicted on it in 678, and the four important cities, Kutch, Khotan, Karashar and Kashgar, in which T'ai Tsung had placed Chinese governors, but which the Tibetans had snatched away from his son, were reannexed in 692.

With her Northern neighbours she was less fortunate. The Tungusic Khitans, the future conquerors of half China, made their first raid in 697, beat the troops sent against them, and burnt and pillaged to their hearts' desire, but fortunately still lacked the organization to do more than that.

The Turkish cauldron also was once more on the boil.

The Northern Turks had begun to grow strong again. Their days of servitude were over. Partly from the itch of plunder, partly out of loyalty to the T'ang's, they felt nothing but contempt for this usurping Wu Empress. When she asked the Khan to give one of his daughters in marriage to her grand-nephew, he simply imprisoned her ambassador and galloped into China with a large force ostensibly to reinstate his benefactors the Lis on the Throne. The dread of hearing Turkish cavalry neigh outside her palace gates made the old Dowager, then already seventy-five, relent somewhat towards Chung Tsung, her second son. She called him back from his exile and declared him her heir.

That was as far as repentance would take her. At once to restore to him the power of which she had deprived him was more than she could face. The Turks seemed satisfied or had by then collected as much loot as they could carry. They went home, but no longer vassals, rather strong and consequently intensely disagreeable neighbours.

Five years later the Khan offered his daughter in marriage to Chung Tsung's son, which offer being accepted, he at last allowed Wu Hou's ambassador to return home.

Decidedly Chung Tsung now represented the rising, she the setting power. The thought was so distasteful, she fell ill,

grew moody, averse to seeing anyone except her two favourite eunuchs Chang I Shih and Chang Ch'ang Tsung.

Her eagle eye thus eclipsed, the T'ang party waxed wondrous bold, liberated Chung Tsung and in his name decapitated those two eunuchs, invaded the Sacred Hall of Life Everlasting and confronted the sick woman with a demand for her immediate abdication in favour of her son, who also put in a shame-faced appearance. Grudgingly and only after a whole night's consideration did she acquiesce in what she finally saw had become inevitable.

She was moved to another Palace strictly guarded, probably an excess of caution, which shows how much terror still breathed from her.

Neither Chung Tsung, though reigning Emperor again, nor her old enemies, threatening in new-found strength, really broke down that fierce soul. Old age defeated her and sickness, ending a few months later in the utter helplessness of death, at least physically.

Spiritually the terrible woman was as alive as ever: the blight of long repression she had inflicted on her sons gripped them to their dying days and it was her example that started her daughter-in-law the Empress Wei and her daughter the Princess T'ai Ping on their career of ambition and crime.

Like her, the Empress Wei sat behind the curtain listening to audiences and councils, and made her opinion prevail in every decision. She shared Wu Hou's mania for high-sounding titles and decreed her consort should be known as the August Sovereign, Heaven's favourite, the Divine Dragon, a compliment he returned by having her addressed as the August Empress, the celestial Favourite and Inspired Auxiliary. Finally she also got rid of the Prince Imperial selected by Chung Tsung among his children, replacing him by her own son. But there her likeness with Wu Hou ended.

She had none of the latter's energy and intelligence, none of her imposing presence or purposeful power of self-control. Passionately fond of pleasure, she pursued it beyond the limit which even so meek a husband as Chung Tsung could allow, should he become aware of it.

Frightened by a guilty conscience and knowing that in such cases eager tale-bearers are plentiful, she determined to make sure that he never should hear about her escapades. With a poisoned cake she sent him into his coffin and declared her young son Chung Mao Emperor, confidently expecting years of power as Regent Empress-Dowager. She had reckoned with-



out her nephew Li Lung Chi, third son of the Jui Tsung, for some time titular Emperor by the grace of Wu Hou.

In Li Lung Chi a spark of T'ai Tsung's genius flamed up again. Without consulting his father, whose mental capacity he probably appraised at its true value, he decided to do for him what he was unable to achieve himself, namely, stamp out the self-made Dowager's power, before she had had time to consolidate it, and replace Jui Tsung on the throne, this time without a Dragon Mother to frighten him away again.

Her would-be imitator had failed to copy her model in one vital point, and had not surrounded herself with an impenetrable hedge of henchmen personally interested in supporting her. The omission ruined her.

One night, by the light of a stream of shooting stars, Li Lung Chi penetrated into the Palace grounds, won the guard over to his side, slew the Dowager and proclaimed his father Jui Tsung Emperor. It was a proud day for the poor man so used to having everything done without his advice.

But for the family of the murdered Empress Wei it was a day of unmingled horror. The gates of the capital were closed to prevent the escape of a single member of her clan. All, even infants in arms, were massacred. Her son was deposed and imprisoned.

The last aftermath of Wu Hou's evil spirit flickered out two years later, when Jui Tsung's sister abused the influence she had over her brother and filled all important posts with her nominees with a view to eventually ousting her nephew the Prince Imperial Li Lung Chi from power.

When Jui Tsung, though only a little over fifty, found the weight of government too heavy for his poor crushed shoulders, and transferred it to the Prince Imperial, who then became the Emperor Hsüan Tsung, the Princess T'ai Ping's anger shot out threatening and venomous. An energetic intelligent young man on the throne in place of the futile Jui Tsung did not suit her game at all. She attempted to poison him, but her agent, a palace lady, mismanaged the matter. Not only did Hsüan Tsung remain alive, but he had been made aware of the full extent of her enmity.

Kao Li-shih, though an eunuch, an able and loyal adviser, urged him to drastic action. The guards were mobilized, compelled the Prime Minister, one of the Princess's creatures, to hang himself and seized and killed about a score of others. To his wicked Aunt, Hsüan Tsung sent a message requesting her to remove herself out of the sunlight she disgraced. Her children

were sent to keep her company, and Wu Hou's pernicious influence received its final quietus.

Jui Tsung, his hair on end, had watched the hubbub from the top of a gate and refused to come down before signing a document making his abdication still more complete. He then shook the dust of the Palace, where life was so hectic, off his terrified feet and retired as fast as they could carry him to a more secluded residence. There he breathed and ate and woke and slept for three years until one day he forgot to wake, and continued his slumbers in a magnificent tomb; for Hsüan Tsung was always a dutiful son.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE HEIGHT OF THE T'ANG PERIOD AND THE BEGINNING OF DECLINE

**N**OT that Hsüan Tsung had much time for mourning his departed father. Both foreign and home affairs claimed immediate attention. Foreign affairs were particularly pressing, although the old menace from the Turks came to a final end the very year of Jui Tsung's death. Victorious in 714, they were beaten by the Chinese in 715, and their Khan, who had frightened the grim Wu Hou herself, having many enemies, was ambushed and slain by the Tolos.

They sent his head to the Emperor, evidently a very clever head, for the moment it fell the Turkish tribes it had kept welded together into a formidable fighting force relapsed into weakness and disunion. Their camping-grounds round the Orkhon were invaded by Uighurs presently converted to Manichæism, whereas the Turks annexed by Islam were drawn into the tempestuous course of its European Conquests far away from the frontiers of China.

But the originators of Islam, the Arabs, were a source of considerable trouble to the T'angs, though the official intercourse between them mostly remained limited to polite embassies exchanging valuable presents, horses and jewels from the Arabs, silks and trinkets from the Chinese.

Polite embassies, though, is saying too much—the Arab ambassadors refused to follow the etiquette of the Chinese Court and prostrate themselves before the Emperor. Hsüan Tsung, not being in a position to incur their displeasure, conceded the point. He had received other embassies leaving him no illusions as to the strength of Arab irruptive energy. In 719 pitiful wails came to him from the principalities of Ferghana threatened by the fury of the Mahommedan flood. The King of Bokhara wrote :

“ Your subject is as grass crushed beneath the hoofs of your steeds, O Sage and Sacred Sovereign, ruling by the grace of Heaven. From afar I clasp my hands. I prostrate myself. I bless your bounties. I

worship You like a God. My family has long been in peaceful possession of Bochara. By arms and otherwise we have loyally served Your Empire. But now each year devastated by the Arabs, my country has lost peace. I humbly beg you deign assist me in my misfortune. I beseech you to order the Turgash to come to my help. With their cavalry I could crush the Arabs. Humbly I entreat you to fulfil my prayer. Meanwhile I send you two Persian mules, a Syrian carpet, and of incense 30 lb. My wife the Queen sends two carpets to the Empress. If I have pleased you, vouchsafe to send me a saddle, harness and weapons, and to my wife robes and rouge."

The King of Chodshent pleaded:

"My great grandfather, my grandfather and my father and my family, my uncles and brothers from long ago till now have been devoted loyally to Your Great Empire. Now the Arabs ravage my country. They have carried away my treasures and my people's possessions. They have imposed crushing taxes. I hope Your Imperial Beneficence will induce them to remit these. Then I and mine will be able to guard the Western Gate of Your Great Empire a long time still."

And the King of Samarkand clamoured even more urgently for assistance:

"For thirty-five years now we battle without truce or peace against the Arab robbers. Every year we must mobilize infantry and cavalry. Six years ago (712) the Arab Commander-in-Chief the Emir Kotaiba came with a large army. His horsemen are many. Against my walls Arabs have erected 300 catapults. I implore Your Imperial Beneficence, hearing of my desperate plight, to send Chinese Soldiers to my rescue."

Hsüan Tsung, his hands full with keeping Tibetans and Khitans off Chinese soil, and afraid of risking a quarrel with such invincible warriors as the Arabs, did not accede to these pitiful entreaties at that time, though in the second year of his reign, Chang Hsiao-sung, one of his Tarim generals, made a highly successful raid into the upper valleys of the Oxus and Jaxartes, putting the fear of Chinese prowess even into the hearts of the Arabs, a feat he duly commemorated in a rock inscription. Since then serious difficulties in the recruiting of the army seem to have occurred.

In 711 Jui Tsung had decreed that every able-bodied man was liable to military service from twenty-five to fifty-five. With the frontiers at peace, this would have been a light burden, but inefficiently handled and with constant fighting necessitated by the aggressiveness of Tibetans and Khitans, the system grew into a real calamity for the peasantry from whom the soldiers were principally levied.

At the beginning of a campaign press-gangs would go round, scattering dismay and terrified flights and runnings to cover



throughout the villages, finally only netting a pitiful collection of country lads without a notion of how to march or shoot.

In 722 this was changed, and a standing army of 130,000 professional soldiers established instead. This seems to have worked well, until among the horrors of An Lu Shan's rebellion the old horror of the press-gang also reappeared. But that was thirty years later.

In 746 the professional army beat the Tibetans on the shores of Kuku nor with a thoroughness that quelled their military ardour for some time. Soon after, it crowned its achievements by an amazing march across the precipitousness of the Hindu-kush passes into the valley of the Indus, a descent of 15,400 perilous feet. The leader was Kao Hsien-chih, a general of Korean origin.

His brilliant exploit spread the fame of Chinese weapons far and wide and brought about the unhesitating submission of seventy-two principalities in Central Asia, who previously had fancied themselves distant enough to stop paying tribute. Kao Hsien-chih convinced them that China's power had a very long arm indeed. Unfortunately this was to be its last manifestation in those regions for long and troubled centuries.

Already in 752 disaster overtook the great leader himself. Alarmed at the energy of this enterprising mind, the smaller ones, all the cities of Ferghana united their separate cowardices into one big and therefore tolerably brave coalition, strengthened by the support of the Arabs, overjoyed at an opportunity of striking a blow at the only Eastern power they could not despise. Outnumbered and surrounded, Kao Hsien-chih's army of 30,000 was almost annihilated.

Among the few prisoners taken and carried off to Samarkand there were some who understood the art of making paper, and taught it to the Arabs. Kao Hsien-chih himself just managed to escape, as it proved, to his misfortune. Death on that spot among his own soldiers, in the glorious intoxication of battle, would have been happier than the end to which an ungrateful monarch condemned him three years later, decapitation for alleged robbery of supplies out of the public granaries.

Hsüan Tsung's only excuse is that just then his nerves were completely shattered by the terrible and to him wholly unexpected revolt of An Lu Shan. Others had seen the peril, and warned him, calling An Lu Shan a wild northern dog, treacherous and black-hearted. They were not listened to. Hsüan Tsung had drifted into the pernicious habit of closing his ears to anything unpleasant. He liked that fat, jovial, and apparently

exceedingly good-natured semi-Turkic general. True, the Khitans had beaten him twice, but he had beaten them too, and was surely profoundly grateful to his kind master who not only saved him from being executed, as was usually done to defeated commanders, but had besides loaded him with favours and trusted him far beyond the limits of the most rudimentary prudence. Immense military and political strength was allowed to be concentrated in the hands of this man, charged with the defence of the northern marshes.

Fancying that the peace and prosperity which the energetic work of the first half of his reign had produced was a natural state impossible to disturb, the army organization in the centre was left to drift into ultra-pacifist inefficiency.

Further, growing too lazy to tear himself away from the delights of Ch'ang-an and face the fatigue of long inspection tours throughout the Empire as Kao Li-shih urged him to do, governors of distant provinces, left to their own devices, ceased to feel any curb on their personal ambitions. And close at hand the entire government was confided in purblind trustfulness, first to a base intriguer, Li Lin-fu, and on his death in 752 to Yang Kuo-chung for no better reason than that he was the cousin of the despotically leading favourite, the famous Yang Kuei Fei.

Hsüan Tsung's downfall is often attributed to her extravagance, her capriciousness, her love of pleasure, ensnaring him in a round of revelry away from the sober work of state affairs. And it probably is true that her influence produced or helped to produce that excessive relaxation of the bonds of etiquette which destroyed all dignity and discipline at his Court.

But the real causes of the final catastrophe lay in the Emperor himself and were at work some time before 745, when Yang Kuei Fei entered the Palace. The mere fact that she was transferred to the Emperor's harem from that of his son whom he comforted with the gift of another concubine, indicates a grave falling off from the recognized standard of morality. His long reign of forty-four years falls into two clearly differentiated periods.

In the first, thanks to his own splendid energy and the advice of able statesmen like the distinguished scholar and poet, Chang Chiu-ling, he proved a worthy descendant of the great T'ai Tsung, fearlessly checked the abuses which had crept into the administration under cover of the weakness of the last two Emperors and the strength of feminine intrigues.

Frugal in his habits, determined to stamp out the evils of luxury, he ordered the palace ladies to dress with the utmost



simplicity, closed some silk factories and burnt superfluous knick-knacks in a huge holocaust of human vanities.

Keenly interested in education, he endowed a large library at which scholars were invited to hold dissertations, he founded schools throughout the country ; he widened the range of subjects for the classical examinations which were the gate to office ; he reformed the calendar ; prayed for his people's welfare on the heights of T'ai Shan, worshipped at the Tomb of K'ung Fu Tzū, and restrained monasticism grown excessive under Wu Hou's liberal patronage.

Then, imperceptibly at first, but ere long quite unmistakably, a fatal change set in. Energy gave out.

A strange indolence numbed the intellect that had been so keen and fine. Caution, criticism, deliberation were all thrown to the wind. They involved mental effort, and effort was terribly irksome when drifting was so pleasant and apparently so safe. A blind faith, always easier than reasoned sifting of evidence, replaced his former love of truth, and degenerated into a gullibility criminal for a man in his position.

He had visions, he heard transcendental voices, any tale about proofs of supernatural interposition either by the divinified Lao Tzū or other sainted mystics was good enough for the man who formerly had declared that Sages were the counsellors of his soul, not mythical immortals. An Lu Shan's professions of undying loyalty were swallowed wholesale and the Prime Minister's reports that all was well in the best of worlds implicitly believed. The death penalty was abolished ; had not magpies built their nests in prison-yards in token of human sinlessness ? Also an express service of couriers was arranged between Canton and Ch'ang-an to bring nefles fresh and fragrant to the beautiful Yang Kuei Fei, no whim of hers left unsatisfied, even when it meant parting with the highly-prized poet, Li T'ai Po.

No doubt Hsüan Tsung's evil genius, Li Lin-fu, did much to foster his tendency to intellectual laziness and physical self-indulgence. It suited his designs admirably to find the control of state affairs left entirely in his hands.

He soon became the absolute master, obtained Ch'ang Chiu-ling's dismissal into exile, killed a Censor who dared expostulate and thus successfully silenced the others. Bribe by a concubine who wanted her son to be made Prince Imperial, he induced the Emperor to condemn the existing Prince Imperial and two other sons of his to death with no proof of guilt but Li Lin-fu's slanders. Cunningly, assiduously, this sinister schemer, honey on his lips, a sword in his heart, plied his victim with that dope most dangerous for rulers—flattery, encouraging him to live in a

dreamland of pictures and lyrics, which with the help of incomparable masters like Wu Tao Tze, Wang Wei, Hao Kan, Li T'ai Po, Tu Fu, all attracted to Ch'ang-an by his truly royal munificence and enthusiastic understanding, was indeed a wonder, a miracle so dazzling, the high light of all the spiritual achievement of the T'ang period is concentrated on the brief years of its shining.

Palace and Temple walls glowed with stupendous landscapes, fierce-eyed dragons, benign Buddhas and their train of saints, splendid scrolls immortalized the famous horses brought as tribute from the West, deeply carved screens imaged the long flight of cranes above evergreen pines, the Pear Tree Garden throbbed with strains of the bright music which Hsüan Tsung preferred to the more rigid tunes of old; beautiful women in sheen of pearls and satins glided through the fantastic measures of the rainbow skirt and the feather jacket dance, festivals in Orchid Pavilion or on Peony Terrace, kindled to verses welding beauty of thought and perfection of form to one exquisite whole, poets, painters, sculptors, scholars vying with each other as to who should drink deepest or most fully express the wonders of that inspired world; everywhere an exuberance of life at its richest and its best.

Had the Emperor been strong enough to withstand its engrossing intoxication and to remember that behind and beneath the world of art there lies a drab world of hunger, selfishness, greed and toil which no ruler can afford to ignore, the wonderful dream could have been prolonged to the end of his life and beyond.

But he chose not to remember. Li Lin-fu saw to it that none should venture to remind His Majesty of ugly facts.

Even after his death (752) when it had become safe to prove him a rogue and to fling his body out of his sumptuous coffin into a pauper's grave, his successor Yang Kuo-chung, though less of a flatterer, possessed none of the foresight, courage, honesty and determination needed to avert the threatening storm.

The Yang tribe (Yang Kuei Fei's three sisters had also been admitted into the Imperial Seraglio) broadened out in the unstinted sunshine of Imperial favour. Their laughter grew ever louder and more hilarious at the Court of Ch'ang-an; singing and dancing, feasting and drinking, painting and versifying went on in careless gaiety, the while An Lu Shan was drilling troops and sharpening arrows away in the North, where his infatuated master had entrusted him with unlimited authority.

And suddenly in the eleventh month of 755 when he con-



sidered his arrows sharp enough, he set 150,000 men with all their lust of blood and loot at that generous master's throat.

Down they swept across the Yellow River, slaying and burning, brushing aside what resistance the feeble Imperial forces could offer. Panic-stricken one city opened its gates, and its garrison of 10,000, probably unpaid and ill-disciplined, was cut down to a man; another, taken by storm, saw its two commanders hacked to a thousand pieces.

The defender of a third city, starved into submission, when dragged before the victors, prayed he might be re-born a demon of the most fiendish description in order to be able to torment the great criminal, An Lu-shan. Judging by subsequent events his prayer seems to have been fulfilled.

But at the time victory upon victory marked the rebel's progress. Lo yang, which an over-confident pacifism had left utterly defenceless, was obliged to surrender. Its governor in full official robes took his seat in his yamen and hurled volleys of maledictions against the rebel, who promptly had him beheaded. There was no mercy in An Lu-shan's heart viciously beating behind dense layers of fat.

The fall of Lo yang stung Ch'ang-an into frenzied realization of its own appalling plight.

An army or rather an armed rabble of 60,000 men was hastily scraped together, Kuo Tzŭ-i and Ko-shu-han appointed commanders-in-chief. The latter wished to keep on the defensive and concentrate his troops to guard the passes of the Lo.

Hysterical orders from Yang Kuo-chung compelled him to attack the superior rebel force. His raw recruits, advancing carelessly, were caught in a valley and completely knocked out by an avalanche of logs, rocks and spears hurled down on them from the overhanging cliffs. Ko-shu-han himself was taken prisoner. Disgusted with the feckless government of Ch'ang-an, when asked by An Lu-shan why he had dared to oppose him, he humbly answered:

"Forgive my poor eyes failing to recognize an Emperor."

Which pleasing flattery saved his life and even brought him a lucrative post in the administration being set up by An Lu-shan, shortly to inflate his voluminous person still further with the title of Fighting Martial Sovereign Lord of the Great Yen Dynasty.

Meanwhile in Ch'ang-an, Yang Kuo-chung completely lost what little head he ever had. The only idea his bewildered brain was able to form clearly and consistently was to put as many miles, and those as speedily as possible, between himself and An Lu-shan.

There was a special enmity between the two men. At the outset of his revolt, An Lu-shan had even pretended it was only directed against the futile Prime Minister.

Hsüan Tsung, who had got out of the habit of using his own judgment, let himself be infected by Yang Kuo-chung's panic. Flight, and flight immediate, swift and secret was decided on. By the failing light of stars, in the cool greyness of an early dawn, out of the Gate of Prolonged Autumn the descendant of the Great T'ai Tsung crept like a thief away from his ancestral palace, with a flustered crowd of concubines, sons, grandsons, daughters-in-law, eunuchs and serving-maids.

The hero, Yang Kuo-chung, joined them with a strong military escort. On passing the public granaries he advised they should be set on fire, to prevent their benefiting the rebels. But Hsüan Tsung, with a sudden awakening of conscience, forbade this on the ground that An Lu-shan would oppress the people less if his troops were plentifully supplied with food. The Emperor's own supply, though, had been forgotten in the flurry of that early start.

The whole party had to live on the country, which could only produce a few bowls of rice, beans and millet. The Imperial grandchildren were so famished that they fought for this insipid mixture and gobbled it up with their fingers.

At last Ma Wei was reached, where they were to rest for the night. There the escort, hungry, disgusted, out of hand, could contain itself no longer, grew insolent and dangerous with the desire to vent its spleen on some living scapegoat.

The miserable Yang Kuo-chung had the ill-luck to fall into their clutches. The life which he had been so anxious to preserve did not last long ; soon his head dangled a ghastly feast for crows from the crenellated gateway of the town. Yang Kuei-fei's sisters were also seized and massacred. And still the blood-lust of the hungry soldiers was not appeased ; would not be appeased till from the bitterly grieving Emperor they had wrung the verdict that the beautiful Yang Kuei-fei herself was to be executed. Kao Li-shih, with him at so many important moments of his life, was given the gruesome task of fixing the noose round the favourite's neck and hanging her in a Buddhist sanctuary.

With the extermination of the Yangs, who seem to have been thoroughly unpopular, the wrath of the guards subsided and they returned to their obedience.

Next day all the notables of the district gathered round Hsüan Tsung, beseeching him not to forsake them and assuring him of loyal and effective support. But the broken-hearted old



man, still obsessed by Yang Kuo-chung's idea, speedy flight to Szechuan, would not hear of staying. Perhaps, too, he remembered the landscapes Wu Tao Tze had once painted of its scenery. Amidst the grandeur of those hills and dales, those waterfalls and mountain streams, those towering trees and billowing clouds, one might forget the cruel anguish of one's loss.

The Prince Imperial, however, in the full vigour of his years (he was then forty-five), saw nothing attractive in this journey South, taking him daily further from any possibility of striking a blow at that wild northern dog, who deserved so many. When the notables pressed round him and laid beseeching hands on his bridle urging him not to jeopardize the cause of legitimate order by depriving them of all leadership, he yielded, dispatched his son the Prince Chen to catch up the Emperor already on his way, and informed him with as many dutiful protestations of regret as the occasion demanded, but still quite unmistakably, of his determination not to follow him any further, but instead to become the rallying-point of all loyalist forces.

Hsüan Tsung raised no objection, sent the Prince Imperial his blessing, 2,000 men of his own bodyguard and the advice to seek assistance from the North-western Protectorates, among whom T'ang was a name to conjure with.

Then lonely, unhappy, a fugitive in his own country, he proceeded South, while the Prince Imperial turned his horse's head due north towards Ping Liang in Kan Su, from which to watch, and where possible, control events. These followed each other, or rather tumbled over each other in a whirl of cataclysms.

Ch'ang-an, waking up in the morning to find itself without Emperor, minister or garrison, had to submit to the rebels, who celebrated their victory in orgies of feasting and plundering. Many of the inhabitants had fled, but Wang Wei was caught, for some time kept a prisoner in a Temple, and finally, it is not known under what threats, forced to accept office in the new government. At a banquet near the Frozen Pearl Lake, with which An Lu-shan rewarded his fellow villains, Hsüan Tsung's famous musicians of the Pear Tree Garden were ordered to show their skill. Overcome with emotion their voices failed them, they could neither play nor sing. Then their leader was seized and savagely slaughtered, and they had to enliven the rebels' guzzlings with the melodies taught them by the artist Emperor, now a distant exile.

Wang Wei hearing of this wrote :

" Wounded the hearts of the 10,000 clans, clouds arise of tumultuous smoke,  
 When shall the 100 officials be able  
 Once more to lift their face to the sky ?  
 On palace pathways, fallen the blossoms of autumn acacias,  
 Over pale waters of tremulous blue,  
 A wailing of pipes and a sobbing of lutes."

Li T'ai Po, wandering in remote mountain solitudes, also mourned :

" My whitening hair would make a long, long rope  
 Yet leave the depths unfathomed of my woe."

And Tu Fu, another fugitive from the foul violence let loose by An Lu-shan over a marvellously cultured, happy, prosperous community, sank into ever deeper melancholy grieving :

" Black the smoke of camp-fires,  
 White the bones of the fallen ;  
 Countless the wailing ghosts of the slain in the strife ;  
 Lowly the old man full of sorrows and sighs."

Suddenly, early in 757, a fearful calamity befell the man who had brought so many calamities on others. An Lu-shan became blind.

Covered with pustules as well, he lost the last remnant of control over the fiendish cruelty of his nature. His fits of rage were appalling ; hitting, hurting, killing came to be his chief amusement. But this violence was to turn against him.

His eldest son, An Ch'ing-hsü, suspecting that his claims to the succession were to be sacrificed to a half-brother, the son of a favourite concubine, hatched a plot of assassination with his father's bodyguard. An eunuch who had been shamefully ill-treated, volunteered for the work, crawled into his hated master's tent at night and ripped open his enormous belly. He died and was buried and succeeded on his ill-gotten throne by his parricide son, who, however, did not sit there long.

With An Lu-shan the force which held soldiers together and civilians cowed, disappeared.

The new Yen Emperor was a mere drunkard, lost in his cups and his harem, incapable of securing the devotion of the ablest general on the rebel side, Shih Ssü-ming, a fellow-countryman and stalwart friend of his father's, for whom he had won many a victory.

On the other hand, the Prince Imperial, no doubt because Hsüan Tsung was slipping into utter senility, assumed name and rôle of Emperor in the seventh month of 756, and became Su Tsung.

On his father he conferred the rank of Supreme and Heavenly



Sovereign Lord. It was a higher title than his own, but implied considerable remoteness from the affairs of this world.

Within seven months appeals for help backed by promises of liberal rewards collected a force of 150,000 men from the Tarim Basin, from Ferghana, from Khotan. A contingent of Arabs and a corps of 4,000 Uighurs led by the son of the Khan, provided valuable cavalry.

Kuo Tzŭ-i, who had already inflicted a severe defeat on Shih Ssŭ-ming, was appointed acting, Su Tsung's son, the Prince Chou, honorary Commander-in-chief.

Determined to do or die they marched towards Ch'ang-an. The rebels caught between frontal onslaughts of Chinese infantry and flank and rear attacks of Uighur cavalry were decimated, butchered from noon to sun-down, 60,000 of them.

Terrified remnants fled back into the town and made night hideous with their yells. The Uighurs wanted to dash after them, but Prince Chou, knowing what such an inrush would mean, persuaded them to wait till next morning.

When it came he again succeeded in restraining their ardour by prospects of greater glory and easier loot in Lo yang, to which he induced them to continue their march immediately, without entering Ch'ang-an at all.

It had been arranged that at the division of spoil, immovables and men should be allotted to the Chinese, movables and women to the Uighurs. From these horrors the Prince had saved Ch'ang-an. No wonder its citizens could hardly contain themselves for joy and grateful delight at seeing a prince of the great House of T'ang, that symbol of peace and unity, once more in their midst.

He stayed three days, then hastened on to keep an eye on his dear but somewhat dangerous friends the Uighurs.

However, when after another severe battle the rebels were defeated and driven out of Lo yang, the prince realized that their itch for loot could no longer be balked. For a while they were allowed to help themselves to whatever took their fancy, till the Prince managed to buy them off with 10,000 rolls of costly silks.

Meanwhile An Lu-shan's drunken son attempted to hold on in the north-east, but in 759 Shih Ssŭ-ming, proclaiming himself King of Yen, had him murdered and turned the retreat of the rebels into a determined advance.

Li Kuang-pi was defeated, Kuo Tzŭ-i kept on a cautious defensive. For another two terrible years this fratricidal war went on surging back again as far as Lo yang, once more seized by the rebels.

Even Ch'ang-an was again threatened. But Shih Ssü-ming had a son Chao-i, whom the Imperialists had defeated. For this mishap the enraged father swore he would punish him with death. Swiftly Chao-i made up his mind that killing was more blessed than being killed.

The task was easy. Like his friend An Lu-shan, Shih Ssü-ming, harsh, brutal, pitiless, was hated by his own men. The captain of his guards was won and shot him dead as he was mounting his horse. This put an end to the rebels' luck.

Chao-i assumed their leadership, called himself fourth Emperor of Yen. It availed him nothing. He had none of his father's military talent, the country exhausted with prolonged warfare was no longer a place good to loot, only a wilderness in which nothing but hard toil could keep off starvation. Not an encouraging state of things for revolutionaries.

Consequently in ever greater numbers they turned peaceful, docile citizens again. By 763 Chao-i, a deserted fugitive, hanged himself in a northern forest.

The rebellion which An Lu-shan, with criminal callousness, had started eight years before, was at last completely crushed.

Neither Hsüan Tsung nor Su Tsung lived to see its end. They had both passed beyond human strife the year before.

When Su Tsung first returned to Ch'ang-an he knelt for three days in deep mourning among the charred ruins of his ancestral temple. Then he went forth to greet his father, whom he had called back from Szechuan. He met him dressed in purple, not in Imperial yellow, but Hsüan Tsung took off his own dragon robe and placed it on the shoulders of his son. He was assigned a residence in the Palace of Abundant Blessings (Hsing Ch'ing Kung) and at first treated with every consideration. But later, under the evil influence of a rapacious eunuch, Li Fu-kuo, probably anxious to divert the money spent on the upkeep of the old Emperor's establishment into his own pocket, he was relegated into an inner Pavilion and separated from his faithful Kao Li-shih, whom Li Fu-kuo, fearing his protests, had contrived to get banished.

The aged Hsüan Tsung may not have been conscious of what was being done. It was a mere shadow of the brilliant patron of Wu Tao-tzū, Wang Wei, Tu Fu, Li T'ai Po, who lingered on for another two years in the evening sunshine of that western Pavilion. When seventy-seven years of age, he sickened and one day in May even the exhilarating warmth of spring could no longer rouse him. He closed the eyes that had seen so much beauty and so much desolation and lay still and cold amidst the fresh leaves and flowers of joyfully returning life.



His son Su Tsung had also sickened, and though only fifty-one, seems already to have lost all will to do and be. His wife, the Empress Chang, and the eunuch Li Fu-kuo between them, controlled him entirely. Life under their tutelage may not have been worth living. Nothing good has been recorded about them. While he lay ill, they quarrelled and the Empress urged the Prince Imperial to have the eunuch slain. He refused, but Li Fu-kuo got wind of his former ally's amiable intentions and promptly clapped her and her son into prison. Then Su Tsung, only a bare fortnight after his father, drifted away out of all participation in worldly affairs, leaving the throne to his son the Prince Imperial, who became the Emperor Tai Tsung.

Li Fu-kuo, still almighty, dispatched his two prisoners to keep Su Tsung company in his grave. Though this may not have grieved Tai Tsung particularly it showed him the amount of power this eunuch had managed to obtain. A man who could kill a Prince and an Empress with perfect impunity might not hesitate to serve an Emperor the same way. Better be on the safe side. He feigned friendliness to Li Fu-kuo. But one night burglars penetrated into the latter's room and stole his head and one of his arms. His family supplied him with wooden ones to save his cutting a bad figure in the next world.

Later on, however, Tai Tsung fell under the domination of another eunuch, Yü Ch'ao-ên, whose hold over him was largely based on his real or assumed devotion to Buddhism.

Buddhism had once again won a leading influence at the capital, partly on account of the missionary activity of Amôgha, an Indian monk, who brought the books, prayers and images of the Mantrayana school of Buddhism with him from Ceylon.

He was well received by Hsüan Tsung, created Duke by Su Tsung and so indispensable to Tai Tsung he was not allowed to return home. His teaching, unlike the earlier purer Buddhism, countenanced elaborate services for the welfare of the souls of the departed, which ensured it a wide popularity. At his instigation Tai Tsung ordered 1,000 monks and nuns to chant masses for his deceased mother on the fifteenth day of the seventh month every year. This started the custom of setting that anniversary apart for the commemoration of the dead.

Another circumstance favourable to a strong Buddhist revival arose out of the distracted conditions of the times, which drove people to seek safety and peace behind monastic walls, and turned their gaze from the hopelessness of the present world to the bright promises of Amitaba's Paradise beyond.

Tai Tsung only followed the prevailing fashion when he

supported a hundred monks in his palace to attract blessings and avert evil by the fervour of their chants.

In the preceding reign Wang Wei and his brother Wang Chin had also supported a certain number of poor monks. Wang Chin is even credited with having brought about Tai Tsung's conversion to the fold of Buddhism.

Undoubtedly a drift towards the religion of Mercy did much to mitigate the brutalizing effects of the prolonged fighting. Fighting darkened the whole first three years of Tai Tsung's reign.

The last direct flicker of An Lu-shan's rebellion did indeed die out, but at the end of 763 the military and financial weakness, to which it had reduced the country, brought on an appalling inroad of barbarians. Two hundred thousand Tibetans and Tangutans suddenly swept down on Ch'ang-an. The garrison fled, the Emperor fled, leaving the unfortunate citizens who had no means of following their example at the mercy of the invaders. These robbed and slew and raped and burnt to their hearts' content. The glorious city which had just begun to recover from the crime of An Lu-shan was again reduced to misery and desolation.

The great Kuo Tzŭ-i himself had no more than thirty horsemen at his command, but also a heart aflame with indignation at his country's helplessness. He roused the country. He gathered 4,000 men. By constant beating of drums and a far-flung line of camp-fires, he made the barbarians believe a large Imperial army was advancing against them. As they had come to plunder, not to fight, and nothing tempting was left in Ch'ang-an, they turned homewards, heavily laden with loot. Tai Tsung crept back to his capital. But he had not yet come to the end of his troubles.

Pu-Ku Huai-en of the T'ieh-lo tribe, an auxiliary commander who had rendered valuable services during the campaigns against the rebels and been lavishly rewarded, now turned rebel himself. In the last months of 764 he besieged the important city of Fêng-t'ien with an immense host of Uighurs, Tibetans, Tangutans, even of Chinese, attracted by the chance of pillage. To that multitude Kuo Tzŭ-i had nothing to oppose but local militia. However, distributing it in a large number of units, he slowed down Pu-Ku Huai-en's gigantic onslaught by a disconcerting screen of guerilla attacks.

But what definitely broke the danger was the disappearance of Pu-Ku Huai-en, who fell ill and died, whereupon his mixed forces at once started quarrelling among themselves. As a climax heavy rainfalls drenched the Tibetans to the bone and took all the starch out of their martial order.



Kuo Tzŭ-i, fearlessly going to the Uighurs, many of whom had served under him against An Lu-shan, succeeded in winning them back to the Emperor's side. Brotherhood was sworn and consecrated with copious libations of wine. Mother Earth receiving her share, bore witness to the oath which was kept quite well, all the better for proving a paying venture. Kuo Tzŭ-i had whispered to his regained friends that the Tibetans were marching homewards, slowly because weighted down with masses of stolen treasure. The Uighurs took the hint, pursued their allies of yesterday, caught them up, beat them and deprived them of many lives and all their spoils.

Peace was at last re-established and T'ai Tsung could look round again over his dominions and think of starting the urgently needed work of reconstruction. But it never was fully carried out, perhaps it could not be. There were not enough hands to do it. The population which during the reign of Hsüan Tsung up to 754 had grown—from roughly  $41\frac{1}{2}$  to about 53 million souls—an increase of 11 millions, had shrunk by 766 to less than 17 millions—a decrease of 36 million human beings! Their deaths are all chargeable to An Lu-shan's account, whose revolt with its direct and indirect consequences plunged the country into an abyss of ten whole years of purely destructive activity.

Between the plundering of the invaders and the requisitions of the official defenders, most of the peasants had given up in despair. Immense tracts of country lay bare and uncultivated. In order to feed the army, Kuo Tzŭ-i had almost literally to turn his soldiers' swords into ploughshares and make them till the fallow ground.

Recovery was slow. A census taken in 780 only shows an increase of a little over one million—a small figure for fourteen years, whereas under Hsüan Tsung a similar period would register a growth of over four millions.

Reconstruction was further impeded by the great reduction in purchasing power which the Mussulman conquest of Persia and of the Central Asian principalities had produced in China's best foreign market. The narrow, violent spirit which the Arabs had substituted for the genial tolerance of Confucianism and the deep peace of the Law of Buddha added to the difficulties and reduced the profits of the Western and South-western trade.

The military weakness of the Empire cut down those of the northern trade, even at times reducing them to the minus figures of mere tribute.

A third retarding influence was the lack of ability shown by

the government in the handling of its financial troubles. Undoubtedly these were very great, especially as the relaxation of central control, begun under Li Lin-fu's evil régime and considerably aggravated by An Lu-shan's rebellion, tempted many provincial governors to reduce their remittances to Ch'ang-an to a minimum. Consequently there were no reserves on which to draw in case of emergency and with no less than five separate revolts to quell between 781 and 786, besides having to fight Tibetan inroads, floods and droughts, the state of emergency was practically chronic.

The expedient of large loan and credit transactions was probably impracticable with the rudimentary banking system of those days. Taxation was the only resource and might have proved sufficient if it had been used properly. But it was allowed to degenerate into abominable extortion and oppression, as usual, in such cases, slaying the goose that laid the golden eggs. Rich merchants were mulcted of their entire income above 10,000 strings of cash. Accused of hiding wealth from the tax collectors, many were beaten and tortured to make them own up. Suicide became an ordinary occurrence among these unhappy people.

Next a 25 per cent. tax was levied on all movable goods, including grain, and a 50 per cent. tax placed on all sale and exchange transactions. Finally houses were hit, large ones had to pay 2,000, the medium-sized 1,000, small ones 500 cash a room. No wonder there were mutterings and such grave discontent, several provincial governors, among them Li Hsi-lieh, thought the moment ripe for replacing the established dynasty by one of their own making.

Its strongest shield, Kuo Tzŭ-i, died in 781, after almost thirty years of arduous and loyal fighting for the T'angs. Tai Tsung realized how much he owed him, married one of his daughters to his son and in his will appointed him regent to his own son Tê Tsung.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DOWNFALL OF THE T'ANGS

**T**Ê TSUNG was thirty-eight when he came to the throne, favourably inclined towards scholars, thoroughly well-intentioned but not equal to the difficulties of those hard times. His first one came from the Uighur legation in Ch'ang-an, not a body of super-polite attachés, but a heavily-armed gang of young bloods helping themselves to everything they fancied and continually making trouble.

Already under Tai Tsung their marauding habits had started rows, but the goodwill of their nation was too precious to lose, and the Ch'ang-an citizens were begged to practise patience. Unfortunately this had its limits: some soldiers provoked the Uighur ambassador. Fighting ensued in which he and many of his compatriots were killed. Tê Tsung, terrified with visions of avenging cavalcades of Uighurs bursting open his gates, gathered the remains of the murdered envoy and his officers and dispatched them homewards by a humble mission of apology. Its leader, Yüan Hsiu, soon discovered he had to be very humble indeed, if he was to come back alive. The Uighur Khan kept him waiting outside one of his ministers' tents for fifty days, shivering in rain, sleet and snow, daily expecting to be slain. It was the Canossa of the T'ang Emperors' suzerainty over the barbarian world. At last the Khan sent an order of dismissal, adding:

"My people demanded your death to avenge that of our ambassador murdered in your Capital. But thinking that if I were to wash this matter in your blood, it would become all the dirtier, I preferred to wash it in water."

So with wet clothes on his back and rheumatism in his bones, poor Yüan Hsiu returned to Ch'ang-an. Not a happy place to return to either.

Li Hsi-lieh's rebel army was just then drawing dangerously near; troops recalled from the North to defend the capital mutinied. Tê Tsung, as unlucky as his father and great-grandfather, fled for safety at top speed.

He found refuge in the fortress of Fêng-t'ien which the warning of a soothsayer had induced him to put into thorough repair. Consequently it stood the assaults of the besiegers so well, these got disheartened and with the successive assassinations of all the rebel leaders, including Li Hsi-lieh, the last to die, poisoned in 786, the disruptive movement petered out and Tê Tsung could return to his probably sadly dilapidated palace in Ch'ang-an.

Peace and friendship were also restored with the Uighurs, and cemented by a marriage between the Khan and one of the Emperor's daughters. The alliance proved extremely useful in beating back the Tibetans, among the most troublesome of the many troublesome neighbours of the T'ang Empire.

Apparently the famous Harun al Rashid had grievances against them too, for in 798 he sent an embassy to China, proposing co-operation between the two monarchs against their joint enemy. This made one more sword with which to keep the marauding impulses of the Tibetans in check and Tê Tsung's last days would have been ended in a pleasant *andante cantabile* if the Prince Imperial had not been attacked by a mysterious illness paralysing his power of speech.

Before any measures could be devised to meet this unexpected calamity Tê Tsung died, and the dumb Emperor Shun Tsung silently mounted the throne and silently relinquished it to his son Hsien Tsung.

Hsien Tsung, an irascible, self-opinionated man, begins that series of immature, inexperienced, pleasure-loving, eunuch-ridden emperors who allowed the noble edifice of T'ang greatness slowly to tumble to pieces about their empty heads. The fault, though, was not entirely theirs. Their childhood spent in the scented atmosphere of the Imperial harem, their youth in an exhausting alternation of excessive amusements and rigid ceremonial, it was not easy for them to acquire that iron constitution, that breadth of vision and grasp of realities so essential to rulers. Further, like all seats of power, the Court was infested by powerful cliques, well-organized vested interests anxious to prevent royalty acquiring any accurate knowledge, any independence of thought or action.

So these pale descendants of the mighty T'ai Tsung pass through the Throne Room where he received the homage of almost all Asia, their energy balked, their will power annulled by a dense ring of eunuchs, priests, flunkies, and quacks.

Wên Tsung, Hsien Tsung's grandson, who inherited Ming Huang's poetic talent, tried his best to break free from the deadly network of eunuch domination. He failed.



The party of corruption wreaked frightful vengeance on the party of righteousness which had prompted and assisted his efforts. The leaders, many distinguished scholars, were sawn in two publicly, as a practical demonstration of the detestable and dangerous nature of high principles when applied to politics. Their families were exterminated, their bodies left to rot on the place of execution. At last the Emperor got an order through for their burial. But the ruling eunuch forestalled him by having those pitiful remains flung into the river. This happened in 853.

It was the gravest blow the dynasty had yet received. Unlike rebellions, which however threatening, could be met and fought in the open, this victory of the devouring parasites of the throne over its loyal supporters meant that the germs of the disease which brought down the Hans, had begun their insidious activities in the vital organs of the T'angs.

Wên Tsung realized the full gravity of what had happened. It had come to this, he, the Son of Heaven, was absolutely helpless in the midst of sinister forces terrorizing, blackmailing, exploiting all round him.

Profoundly discouraged, he gave up the struggle, resigned himself to being the "slave of slaves waxed insolent," turned away from state affairs to his books and poetry, and drooped and died five years later.

His grandfather, Hsien Tsung, was largely to blame for this evil turn in the fortunes of the dynasty. Ostentatiously he had lent the prestige of Imperial favour to the excessive veneration of material relics, which rapacious priests had grafted on to Buddhism, and as markedly showed his disapproval of any intelligent warning raised against it. A miraculous bone, supposedly once part of Buddha's earthly anatomy, was transported to the Palace and received with such a display of honours and adoration as must have convinced every one of its superhuman sacredness.

The great scholar and poet, Han Yü, championing the cause of reason against credulity and that of the national Sage against foreign priestcraft, had the courage to send the Emperor a strongly and eloquently worded memorial against such falling away from Confucian wisdom.

But Hsien Tsung had no use for wisdom. It needed patience, time and study. Magic, miracles, splendid, instantaneous, overwhelming were much more to his taste. Let him be killed, the impious fellow who had dared to cast a doubt on the holiness of Buddha's wonder-working bone.

Luckily Han Yü's friends were able to calm Imperial wrath

sufficiently for the death sentence to be commuted to banishment.

So Han Yü took his talents, spurned in the capital, to far-away Kuangtung whose semi-wild inhabitants he is said to have delivered of the double curse of ignorance and of a cattle-devouring crocodile. Hsien Tsung's death in 820 facilitated his return to office in Ch'ang-an, but he died too soon afterwards to exercise any influence there. It was the South which venerated his memory with a temple never empty of offerings, a Sung Emperor who conferred on him a title of nobility and a Sung poet (Su Tung Po) who wrote his epitaph comparing him to "the Dragon who unrolls the constellations of the Silver River above the regions of the white clouds and descends to this impure world to sweep away its chaff," finally imploring him "to brood over this great wilderness a deified spirit with long streaming hair."

A greater than Han Yü, almost a greater than Li T'ai Po, was also frowned on by Hsien Tsung. Twice he banished Po Chü-i because he also had the odious habit of not being afraid to criticize the mistakes of the mighty. Hsien Tsung's death brought him also back to the Court, which under the new Emperor, Mu Tsung, perhaps thanks to the influence of the Dowager-Empress Kuo, a granddaughter of Kuo Tzū-i's, had returned to the old T'ang tradition of enlightened tolerance.

Otherwise there was little of the true T'ang spirit about it, so long as Mu Tsung and his still more frivolous son Ching Tsung occupied the throne.

Wine, women, polo, balls, shooting, nocturnal fox-hunts filled the days and nights of these two Emperors in a most unimperial manner. Things improved somewhat under Mu Tsung's second son Wên Tsung, who took a practical interest in letters.

Nevertheless, Ch'ang-an with a frequently wholly unintelligent Court and a large population of foreigners, some barely civilized, none with a genuine understanding of Chinese culture, ceased to be that stimulating centre of artistic and intellectual activity it had been under Ming Huang.

Po Chü-i moved away to Lo yang, where life preserved more of the amenities and distinguished intellectuality of the first half of the preceding century. There he added some of the most beautiful poems to Chinese literature, proving that however opaque the international crowd in the capital might be, the general level of culture was as high as ever.

Neither was there any falling off in the skill and number of painters. Indeed, one of the most successful subjects of Chinese



art, representations of bamboo, was brought into fashion at that time by Hsiao Yüeh, friend and contemporary of Po Chü-i's.

The monasteries both Buddhist and Taoist also continued to be munificent patrons of all the arts, architecture, sculpture, painting, music, calligraphy, poetry.

Their libraries did not only contain books of devotion, but were the proud possessors of the works of great authors who, like Po Chü-i, presented copies to their favourite temples.

For these, with their peace and beauty, their generous hospitality in buildings wonderfully located in sublime scenery, were the spiritual centres of those days, not the fox-hunting Court of Ch'ang-an.

It was therefore an act of the most egregious folly to order their dissolution. But rapacity never looks beyond immediate gain, and it was the rapacity of Wu Tsung, a creature of the notoriously hungry eunuch clique, that dictated the outrageous edict of 845, ordering the destruction of 4,600 large and 40,000 smaller Buddhist monasteries and the confiscation of their property for the benefit of the Imperial Exchequer.

He had on a smaller scale experimented in persecution and spoliation before, in 843, when the Manichæans suddenly fell under his displeasure. They were mostly Uighurs, after long, fierce struggles with Kirghiz and Tibetans recently crushed into complete political impotence.

Now the rôle of the Son of Heaven was clearly that of protector of the weak. But Wu Tsung was not interested in Heaven; material wealth with immediate possession was the only motive to which he could respond.

These Uighur Manichæans possessed several churches in China well endowed and filled besides with accumulations of treasure from former days of power and of what movable wealth refugees from Kirghiz invasion had been able to save.

It may be that some thought of avenging the insult the Uighurs had inflicted on his ancestor's ambassador, letting him shiver for days outside their tents, prompted Wu Tsung to attack a defenceless community. A chance of satisfying revenge and rapacity at one and the same time is, of course, irresistible to most.

So the edict went forth, all Manichæan churches to be destroyed, all priests and nuns secularized, all their books and images publicly burnt, all their estates confiscated. Resistance meant death.

Seventy nuns were executed, the terrified remainder forced to adopt Chinese clothes and customs.

Wu Tsung was the richer by some acres of land, some vessels of gold and silver, the poorer by the total loss of that aura of moral superiority which his great ancestor, T'ai Tsung, had reconquered for the Dragon Throne.

He did not care, probably had no idea of it. All he knew was that stolen property tasted so good, he soon began to crave for more.

Influenced by Taoist advisers bitterly jealous of the Buddhists, his eyes fell on the wealth of Buddhist monasteries.

Now the concentration of wealth in the so-called dead hand of a corporation has often been represented as an evil and as a direct theft on the people. This, however, would only be true if the multiplication *ad infinitum* of undifferentiated masses of toilers were the sole function of national wealth, which it emphatically is not, for the simple reason, that these masses themselves need the refuge of oases of beauty, peace, and leisure set apart from the grey sands of endless work.

The Buddhist monasteries, scattered throughout the country far from the narrow lanes of crowded cities in the vast loneliness of lofty hills, admirably sustained the rôle of such refreshing centres of cool green shade and limpid wells unsullied by the hot dust of the world, yet open and accessible to all. Their sumptuous processions, their flaming incense, their offerings of fruits and flowers, their magnificent pictures, their golden Gods, their radiant pagodas, pointing to the blue of heaven, did drive strange rays of divine light into the popular consciousness, sweetening and enlarging it, even though the rays might be deflected by thick veils of ignorance.

Possibly the monasteries and monks had multiplied beyond the real needs of the people.

The proper remedy for this was the one employed by T'ai Tsung, who ordered that Buddhist temples should not exceed a fixed number in each town and that those monks should be unfrocked who failed to live up to their vows.

But moderation and reform were not on Wu Tsung's programme, which contained one item only, the filling of his own and his agents' pockets.

As usual, persecution with intent of robbery camouflaged its greed as righteousness; dangerous abuses were to be rectified, lazy drones to be made to work, corrupt foreign influences to be eradicated, good old national customs to be revised.

As to the 3,000 Nestorian Zoroastrian priests, they also were to be secularized and forbidden to practise their faith in China.



“Tolerance has lasted too long. Let it end. Who will find this measure inopportune or harsh ? ”

Certainly not the swarm of voracious harpies whom this edict licensed to do their worst.

Incalculable losses were inflicted on art by the demolition of splendid Buddhist sanctuaries. Walls on which Wu Tao-tzū had spent his utmost skill were left to crumble roofless, desolate, beaten upon by wind and rain ; hundreds of statues, modelled by great sculptors, were broken up, the bronze ones turned to common cash.

The effect this brigand measure had on the prestige of the dynasty was even more disastrous.

Persecution for the sake of spoliation had been openly acknowledged as a principle of its government. The people had been taught to lay violent hands on sacred objects, confidence was destroyed, the support of numerically still powerful religious bodies alienated, thousands of individuals harmlessly even if not particularly usefully employed in chanting sutras, torn from the comfort and restraint of fixed routine and pitched homeless, breadless and bewildered into a world which had no room for them.

The Edict did indeed turn all the dispossessed monks and nuns and their 150,000 serfs into properly registered taxpayers, in writing ; the working-out of hard realities turned them into a mass of embittered paupers, around whose discontent other discontents could not fail to crystallize.

True, Wu Tsung, his nerves shattered, his bones dissolved by drugs warranted to keep off death, perished a year after the proclamation of his anti-Buddhist edict, and his uncle, who succeeded him as the Emperor Hsüan Tsung, speedily revoked it.

Though making it illegal for anyone to become a monk without official sanction, he restored Buddhism to the sunshine of Imperial favour.

His son and successor, I Tsung, went even further, wrote Buddhist texts with his own hand, ordered discourses on Buddhist sutras to be held in his own palace, visited and re-endowed Buddhist temples and lavished the whole magnificence of Imperial worship on the famous bone at which Han Yü had flung his scorn fifty-three years earlier. Nevertheless, reconstruction failed to catch up with destruction.

For that turmoil of restlessness, discontent, insubordination, unprincipled selfishness and cynical brutality in which the dynasty foundered, Wu Tsung's unstatesmanlike edict must be considered a contributing cause.

The others were frequent and by no means uniformly successful campaigns against invading Tibetans allied to what was left of the now bitterly hostile Uighurs, against Nan Chao, a group of southern tribes, grown formidable under united leadership, against the increasing strength of the Khitans ; further, the consolidation of provincial independence and the youth and weakness of the Emperors, which bowed their authority under that of the eunuchs, those experts at keeping honesty and patriotism out of office.

I Tsung's son, the twelve-years-old Emperor Hsi Tsung, had barely been on the throne a year, when the beginning of the end started with serious disturbances in the East, round the Lower Huang Ho.

They were organized by a man called Wang Hsien-chih and his assistant, Huang Ch'ao, once a respectable salt merchant in Shantung, but drawn by evil stars into revolt against the established order of things. Official authority, lacking both strength and intelligence, was neither respected nor feared.

I Tsung had squandered in reckless expenditure on pleasure-trips, banquets, pageants, funerals, the resources he should have husbanded with the utmost care. Under his little son the eunuch T'ien Ling-tzū and his gang were the actual rulers, Government in their unclean and unskilful hands lost all popular support and when in their fright at the proportions Wang Hsien-chih's rebellion was assuming, they called on all citizens to arm themselves and beat it down, only the first part of this injunction was obeyed.

As to the second, numbers simply jeered at it and in the full pride of their new weapons used them on the rebel side.

However, there were still some generals left profoundly loyal to the T'angs. One of these beat and slew Wang Hsien-chih.

This would probably have ended the insurrection if the quondam Salt Merchant, Huang Ch'ao, had not at once placed himself at the head of it and developed great skill in leadership. His most pressing needs being funds, he headed straight for the richest city, Canton, centre of great industries and a lucrative maritime and overland trade. He demanded to be made its governor. His request was refused ; whereupon he stormed the city and poured the whole bestiality of his hordes over its doomed inhabitants. They were slaughtered wholesale. 120,000 Mahommedans, Jews, and Nestorians disappeared in the massacre, the Nestorians never to be seen again. Even the mulberry trees were cut down, so that it took years for the silk trade to revive.



The dead, however, did not remain wholly unavenged. Their murderers, unused to the climate, were in their turn decimated by small-pox and malaria. Huang Ch'ao had to hasten north with a fever-stricken remnant.

Liu Chü jung, an Imperial general, met and beat it so thoroughly, only a little more pressure was needed to stamp out the rebellion completely. But the level of public morality had already fallen so low, Liu Chü jung allowed Huang Ch'ao to escape, on the ground that generals were not valued in the time of peace, whereas a prolongation of war would enrich them. He was to get all the war he wanted, probably a great deal more.

Huang Ch'ao, whose rallying cry was loot, soon had another 150,000 cut-throats at his command. With these he captured Lo yang in the eleventh month of 880, the fifth year of the rebellion. At the news Ch'ang-an shook with terror.

It felt and knew that under eunuch corruption its defences had been shamefully neglected. What troops there were in the town consisted of show soldiers, dandies, sons of plutocrats who had bought their commissions and never expected to have to soil their glittering uniforms with the dust and blood of real war.

When they were ordered to march out and guard the passes, numbers fell sick and hastily bribed some poor devils to take their place. The Emperor, then seventeen years of age, reviewed the remaining 2,000, and may have inspired them to deep-chested acclamations of loyalty and genuine martial enthusiasm; but this could hardly make up for their complete lack of military training, and the disorganization of supplies.

Other Imperial troops, about 100,000, stationed further East, were already dying of hunger. No wonder their resistance to Huang Ch'ao's advancing multitudes, lasted a bare four hours, after which they broke and fled. The rebel flood spread round the passes officially held by those 2,000 glittering uniforms.

Meanwhile militia levies had arrived at Ch'ang-an to defend it. They found looting it far more to their taste. Beginning with the shops they went on to private houses and proceeded to the Palace. By a back door, which might fitly have been named the Gate of Unending Winter, Hsi Tsung with T'ien Ling-tzŭ, four princes, some ladies and 500 guards fled at dawn, finally taking the bitter road to Szechuan, on which his ancestor had grieved 124 years ago.

In the afternoon of the very same day Huang Ch'ao's vanguard entered Ch'ang-an and fraternizing with the militia soon made pandemonium rule supreme.

When its leader arrived, he proclaimed himself Emperor of a new dynasty, the Great Ch'i, massacred as many T'ang princes as he could ferret out and declared the T'angs finished and unworthy of the heavenly mandate. Which was true enough, but as is invariably the case with revolutionaries, the régime he established was a thousand times worse than the one he overthrew.

The discipline among his troops relaxing under the strain of city temptations, loyalist soldiers managed one night to get in. The people, heartened by their presence, attacked the rebels with sticks and tiles. But the loyalists—so-called—soon tired of fighting and started looting on their own account.

Huang Ch'ao's men rallied and savagely fell on loyalist soldiers and citizens alike. Eighty thousand are said to have been butchered. The streets were slippery with red pools and streams of blood. "So much the better," laughed the Salt Merchant Emperor, "now the town is washed."

Obviously such an Emperor could not attract the support of honest men. Compared to him even the weak Hsi Tsung appeared a most desirable ruler. Nor had he given up the fight. Like Su Tsung in a similar emergency, he appealed to the North-western Protectorates for help.

A small Turkic tribe, the Sha tos, camping round Lake Balkash, were at that time ruled by a born fighter, Li K'o-yung, known as the one-eyed Dragon. He had fought for the T'angs under I Tsung and been rewarded by the privilege of sharing the name Li with the Imperial family.

He readily came forward now with all his forces, 40,000 horsemen dressed in black and therefore nicknamed the Black Crows. Well mounted, well disciplined, well led, they were more than a match for Huang Ch'ao's cut-throats, never real soldiers, and now completely demoralized by years of massacring and looting. Numbers quietly disappeared and with their stolen goods found no difficulty in being reabsorbed in the fold of the righteous.

Reduced to 30,000 men, the Salt Emperor thought it better to leave Ch'ang-an and trek back to his native mountains in Shantung. As a parting kick his followers set fire to the main buildings and strewed the line of their retreat with the overflowings of their loot.

Li K'o-yung's Black Crows, as is the nature of crows, lingered to pick these up, which allowed Huang Ch'ao to make good his escape. But finally, they did catch him up and annihilated his military power.

The salt merchant, the brigand, the rebel, the Ch'i Emperor,



was a harried outlaw in Shantung with a price on his head, of which his own nephew, perhaps with a view of keeping the money in the family, consequently promptly relieved him. He added the heads of his other uncles, and of Huang Ch'ao's wife and children.

With this grisly bagful he set forth to collect the reward. But he fell in with a party of Black Crows also anxious to secure the prize. They took the bag from him, the heavier by one head—his own. This occurred in 884 and ended the rebellion Wang Hsien-chih had begun ten years earlier.

As its trail of blood and fire had swept through almost every province, it left China in the blackest depth of that material misery prolonged wars inevitably produce. Agriculture impeded, trade frightened, the capital almost ruined, its thoroughfares choked with grass and brambles, the happy playground of foxes and hares, the government practically at the mercy of the Black Crows of Li K'o-yung.

Nevertheless, with a man on the Dragon Throne, a way might still have been found out of all the difficulties. But Hsi Tsung was still only a lazy, petulant child; the eunuch, T'ien Ling-tzŭ, had taken care not to let him grow up. He was as much the real power at Court as ever and as unscrupulous as ever about the means of obtaining funds.

He fell out over some salt tax with Wang Chung-jung, a fairly powerful governor, who took his grievances to Li K'o-yung. Li K'o-yung also had enemies he longed to destroy. The most hated was Chu Wên, who out of jealousy had once attempted to get him assassinated at a banquet he gave him.

Brutal, unscrupulous, without any morality whatsoever, Chu Wên was one of those dangerous adventurers whom the stirring up of the dregs of society in troubled times whirls into success and power. His public career began on the rebel side, which he deserted in 882 while it was not yet too weak to make his defection valueless. The calculation proved correct. He was rewarded with an important magistracy.

For some time he posed as a champion of legitimacy, manœuvring Li K'o-yung into the position of a rebel. Their feud, complicated by Wang Chung-jung's quarrel with T'ien Ling-tzŭ, which gradually swelled into war on all eunuchs, refilled the country, barely rid of Huang Ch'ao's hordes, with the trampings, battlings, burnings and lootings of soldiers, Chinese and barbarians.

Again T'ien Ling-tzŭ dragged Hsi Tsung away in precipitate flight out of Ch'ang-an. Again the Black Crows beat down on the unhappy city, this time openly as enemies. The buildings

that had bravely been restored, flamed up and sank to ashes. All the ancestral tablets of the dynasty did so too. Deprived of this protection the poor Hsi Tsung wandered from the valley of the Han to that of the Wei, at times in such discomfort he had to sleep on the roadside, his only pillow a faithful servant's lap.

These hardships cured him of all affection for T'ien Ling-tzŭ. With a sudden flicker of independence he banished him to the far South and himself returned to what was left of his palace at Ch'ang-an, the Black Crows having flown off elsewhere. But he only came back to die, leaving the perilous seat on the throne to his brother, who became the Emperor Chao Tsung.

He was five years younger than Hsi Tsung and quite as unfitted to cope with the situation, which was indeed drifting towards catastrophe with Li K'o-yung and Chu Wên at open war, insolent eunuchs and ill-disciplined guards bullying the Court, the people bewildered and famished, power the prize of any local leader bold enough to risk a bid for it.

Chao Tsung was young and wanted to hunt, drink and make merry, which was natural enough, but which in the precarious state of the dynasty he could not afford to do. His first trouble began with a fight between two rival factions of his own guards, which sent him in terrified flurry to the top of a tower, where an arrow had the impudence to graze his cheek probably sea-green with fear.

Then some palace buildings being set on fire, he was smoked off his perch and driven to seek refuge in the camp of some less pugnacious troops.

Thence he sent desperate S.O.S. messages to Li K'o-yung, the very man whom, to please Chu Wên, he had previously stigmatized as a rebel. But he knew the fighting qualities of his Black Crows. They alone could quell the mutiny. He created their leader King of Chin.

But by smiling on Li K'o-yung he drew on himself the frowns of Chu Wên, and these were not to be taken lightly. To make matters worse, a new rebel, Li Mao Chên, raised the entire neighbourhood, seized Ch'ang-an and once again painted its sky red with the lurid glow of conflagrations.

True to a family habit Chao Tsung fled precipitately and returned in two years' time, after the Black Crows had pacified these parts. Li Mao chên, with proper respect for the sharpness of their beaks, submitted at once and was pardoned.

Chao Tsung fancied he could now at last settle down to the joys of Kingship. He felt quite safe under the wings of the Black Crows in happy unconcern about the fact that their



cawing was directed by Li K'o-yung, and not by him, and that Li K'o-yung's enemy, Chu Wên, was busily organizing an impregnable military position in the north-western and central provinces reaching almost as far as Lo yang.

He hunted and drank and drank and hunted. One night, having overdone both, he returned home in such a passion he had to work it off in murder and with his own hands killed several waiting-women.

The head eunuch, Liu Ki chou, made this scandal a pretext for locking up Emperor and Empress in a small house bare of every comfort. Food was passed in through a tiny aperture; the doors spiked with iron and strictly guarded. It was winter and poor Chao Tsung, thoroughly sobered, groaned aloud with cold and humiliation.

Liu Ki chou, utterly unmoved, proceeded to enthrone the Prince Imperial in place of the deposed father and to run the government for the benefit of his own gang. But eunuch rule was not popular. Some officers conspired, slew Liu Ki chou and restored Chao Tsung to the warmth and spaciousness of his own apartments. Not for long though.

There appears to have been a powerful group behind Liu Ki chou whose revenge the Prime Minister, Ts'ui Yin, dreaded so much, he appealed to Chu Wên for protection. The eunuchs, hearing of this, seized the Emperor, still the figure-head of legitimate authority, and carried him off to Fêng hsiang, where Li Mao chên was in command. They had gone to the wrong address. Li Mao chên detested them; and without much ado ordered the leader and seventy-three others to be beheaded.

Chu Wên, who in the meanwhile had reached Ch'ang-an, did the same to another ninety. Chao Tsung, for the second and last time back in his capital, hailed Chu Wên as his deliverer, gave him his own belt and always generous in the bestowal of titles, created him King of Liang, the Black Crows of the King of Chin having flown back to their own nests. Ts'ui Yin, the Prime Minister, under cover of Chu Wên's swords, unloaded his whole fear of the eunuch party by slaying almost all that remained. Only thirty very young ones were spared for duty in the palace, thereby officially cleared of corruption, incidentally left defenceless against any blow any powerful general might choose to aim at it.

Chu Wên was the quickest to take action and swept both Li Mao chên and Ts'ui Yin out of his way, clearly now directed towards the Throne in a straight, merciless line over and through everything and everybody. But the pivot of his strength

lying further West, he chose Lo yang for the scene of the final step.

In Ch'ang-an, despite ruins, poverty, effeteness, T'ang greatness and loyalty to T'ang traditions was still a living force. Young men of noble birth gathered round the Emperor, a devoted bodyguard, but there were only 200 of them. What could they do against Chu Wên's thousands? So his order for the Court to move to Lo yang had perforce to be obeyed.

Emperor and Empresses, Princes and Princesses, concubines, eunuchs, ministers, secretaries, servants, guards, all had to go. It was a long, sorrowful convoy. Chao Tsung now at last saw Chu Wên in his true colours and contrived to send a message to Li K'o-yung, telling him he was a prisoner in his enemy's hands and that at Lo yang edicts published in his name would be dictated by Chu Wên. Their eyes blinded with tears, the people of Ch'ang-an watched their Emperor and all the remaining splendour of his Court go from them for ever. They had reason to weep.

Chu Wên, true to his brigand origin, ordered all movable property to be carried away, the rest to be destroyed. There should be no possibility left of ever making Ch'ang-an an Imperial residence again. What An Lu-shan had spared and Wu Tsung's Buddhist persecution had left standing, panelled halls and sculptured woodwork, buildings of a beauty so faultless mankind can only produce it once in a travail of a thousand years, this monster reduced to a useless heap of blackened dust.

His next crime was the massacre of Chao Tsung's bodyguard. Of the 200 not one escaped. Their uniforms were wanted for his own men. These now guarded the Emperor with the feline watchfulness of potential murderers. One night they broke into his bedroom. Half naked and wholly drunk, he tried to escape; a concubine threw herself between him and the assassins. But they both were slain and she being dead and dumb was accused of having killed the Emperor. Chu Wên gave him a fine coffin and himself started the lamentations prescribed by the rites, but which none of the terror-stricken Court had had the courage to intone.

Not feeling quite sure of his position yet, he placed one of Chao Tsung's sons on the throne, the Emperor Chao Hsüan, a boy of thirteen, cast by pitiless stars for the tragic part of the last of the T'angs. He was allowed to play it for two years, frightful years of political murderings systematically organized to stamp out any chance of a T'ang revival.

The first victims were the young Emperor's nine brothers. Chu Wên invited them to a banquet at which he feasted them



so well they all got hopelessly drunk. In that condition their kind host had them strangled and their bodies pitched into the river.

The next to be sent there were the last representatives of T'ai Tsung's splendid school of officials, a group of honest and courageous men, loyal to the T'angs and to Confucian principles of government. They were called the Pure. One of Chu Wên's supporters suggested they should be turned into the muddy ones by throwing them into the turbid current of the river. Chu Wên thought this a fine joke and had it duly carried out. Then came the turn of the Dowager-Empress, Chao Tsung's unhappy widow. Chu Wên pretended she was plotting against him. After her death he got tired of pretending and, being powerful, had no difficulty in collecting a big crowd to shout vociferously for his elevation to the throne of the T'angs. The young Emperor sitting there was reduced to the rank of a prince and removed to a cottage surrounded with hedges and well guarded against everything except Chu Wên's assassins. Within a few months of his abdication, they got at him. He was only seventeen. With him ended the T'ang dynasty.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE FIVE DYNASTIES

**T**HE power and glory of the T'ang dynasty and that of the country they ruled so long, had ended half a century before.

It was war-harried, desolate ground on which the black-hearted, red-handed Chu Wên pitched the milestone of a new dynasty, the Latter Liang, not of a new period except in so far as it marked the triumph of the centrifugal over the centripetal forces, which for fifty-three years was to keep China broken up into a number of separate states.

The Latter Liang, though nominally the heirs of the T'angs, actually only ruled one of these states, by no means either the largest or the wealthiest. On the contrary, open to the attacks of the northern nomads, distracted by the change of dynasty and ruled by miscreants like Chu Wên and his gang, it was by far the unhappiest section of China. At several of the local Courts which had already sprung up under the T'angs in Szechuan and along and South of the Yangtze, the T'ang traditions of art, poetry, and elegance were well maintained, numbers of excellent poems and pictures created. But at Lo yang artists fled away from the scowl of Chu Wên to the untroubled loveliness of distant mountain valleys.

The branch of painting in which China holds unquestionable mastery, bird and flower studies, seem indeed to have been given their characteristic style then by the master hands of Hsü Hsi and Huang Chüan and of his son Huang Chi Ts'ai.

It was so comforting to turn from the miseries and distracted politics of the day to absorbed contemplation of those living jewels of earth and sky. Thus the lady Li, torn from her home in one of the many raids that afflicted the weak, divided China of those days, solaced her captivity by tracing the shadows of bamboos which the full moon painted on her paper window.

There also was a marked return to Buddhism ; and once again artists found congenial and remarkable employment beautifying new or restored temple walls with magnificent



frescoes. This meant nothing less than maintaining the glorious landscape and figure painting of the eighth century as a live impulse guiding with its ripe beauty the searchings of that tortured time.

Chih hui, as his name implied, a Buddhist monk of Luminous Wisdom and noted painter of frescoes, was said to hold clouds and hills in the hollow of his hand. Indeed, the interest in painting was so powerful it spread even to the rough Khitans who contributed some capital riding scenes painted with brushes made of the hair of wolves.

Their other contributions to Chinese life were considerably less pleasant. For centuries northern China lay under the shadow of their ambition and their greed. Their Khan, A-pao-chi, one of those dominating leaders in whose vigorous blood the vast horizons of the steppe kindle limitless ambition, can almost be considered a patron of art.

He had visions of the God of Good Luck and ordered these to be painted, also the portraits of famous ministers of old in order to incite his own officers to follow their example. In this he clearly imitated Chinese customs, which he altogether favoured, realizing that his great ambition of becoming the Emperor of at least northern China could never be accomplished by purely nomad methods. Han Yen-hui, a Chinese born and bred in T'ang traditions of administration, was his favourite counsellor and of the greatest use to him in the task of turning the loosely federated tribes whom his sword had conquered, into an organically united state.

Between them these two men founded the Liao Dynasty which for three centuries dominated the vast pasture grounds beyond the Great Wall down to the shores of the Gulf of Pechili and the northern frontier of Korea with its southern capital, finally close to the site of modern Peking.

A-pao-chi was united to Li K'o-yung by bonds of friendship cemented at one of their meetings by an exchange of horses and clothes. Enmity to Chu Wên was another link between them and Li K'o-yung might have been able to wipe him out with the assistance of Khitan cavalry if death had not called him away a year after Chu Wên's usurpation.

His son Li Ts'un-hsü succeeded him in the Kingship of Chin and was fifteen years later to oust Chu Wên's son, Chu Yu-chên, from the Dragon Throne.

Chu Wên himself ended the way he had begun, in blood and crime. He was hated by his own men, whom he used to brand in the face with the number of their regiment to prevent desertion, and loathed by his own sons whose wives he took from

them. One of these sons, Chu Yu-kuei, hearing he was to be disinherited, as became a true chip of the old block, made this an excuse for parricide.

He had no difficulty in winning the assistance of his father's Dragon and Tiger Corps. The old reprobate was lying ill in bed when one summer night the conspirators broke into his room. Catching sight of the son he detested, he cursed him and his own want of judgment in not having had him killed long ago.

"Hold your tongue, old blackguard," the son cursed back, and a second later Chu Wên breathed his last, a sword stuck right through him. His body was wrapped up in coarse felt and buried in a hole dug then and there in his bedroom.

Nevertheless, his curses effectively pursued his son. Chu Yu-kuei did manage to proclaim himself Emperor at Lo yang and to get rid of one of his brothers. But another brother, Chu Yu-chên, rose against, defeated, and killed him.

Internally peace was restored in the Liang territory and according to his lights the new Emperor, Chu T'ien, settled at Pien liang, ruled tolerably well.

But the old feud between Li K'o-yung and his father which he inherited proved too much for him, although Li K'o-yung's son, Li Ts'un-hsü, had to fight the Khitans as well as him.

The reason for the breach of friendship between A-pao-chi and Li Ts'un-hsü was a very simple one. They both desired the same thing, the Empire of China.

A-pao-chi was the first to seize the coveted title, and in 916, mounting a throne erected for the purpose on the hillock of the Golden Bell in the shadow of old forest trees, his officers acclaimed him "the most holy, the most enlightened, heavenly Sovereign Lord."

But Li Ts'un-hsü in the same year won something more substantial, four strong cities of the Liangs, and moved his residence further South, closer to the goal he was working for, Lo yang.

Probably to arrest his advance A-pao-chi broke through his northern defences, won some victories, did much damage, but ultimately had to withdraw before Li Ts'un-hsü's superior forces.

There ensued a few years' peace in their struggle, years which A-pao-chi used to buttress his nation's power with the strong rock of adherence to the principles of K'ung Tzŭ, erecting a temple with full commemorative ritual in honour of the great Sage. Continuing the work of training his barbarians for the brilliant rôle he aspired to make them play, he even introduced a system of writing among them. Meanwhile Li Ts'un-hsü



attacked and severely defeated a Liang general and had what was considered a miraculous stroke of luck in being given the old jade seal of the T'angs, looted forty years before from the palace of Ch'ang-an during the terrible days of Huang Chao. This symbol of a mighty destiny made up for the loss of ten northern cities, which A-pao-chi, once more on the war-path, inflicted on him in 921.

A good deal of fighting turned another two years into a horrible nightmare for the Chinese population of the north-western provinces, and sowed the seeds of that bitter hatred which was in the end to defeat the Khitan Emperor's ambition.

At last heavy snowstorms drove the invaders home and left Li Ts'un-hsü free to hurl all his forces against the Liangs. As a manifesto of his aims he erected an altar in the southern suburb of his capital, sacrificed to Heaven and announced his accession as first Emperor of a new T'ang dynasty. The next step was the annihilation of the rival Emperor.

That son of Chu Wên's, seeing his last army beaten and his last general slain, an open road between him and Li Ts'un-hsü's troops, his life and his throne in imminent danger, his seal stolen out of his bed, decided not to die alone and as his last act of authority, had all his remaining brothers slain. Then he implored an attendant to cut his throat, which the man did, afterwards cutting his own.

A few days later Li Ts'un-hsü held his triumphal entry into the city, which feeling little regret for the brood of Chu Wên, opened its gates wide to its new master.

The last Liang Emperor's head was embalmed and buried beneath the altar of the dynastic Earth God which was then walled and roofed in, to cut it off for ever from the light of Heaven. For the same purpose molten iron was poured over the grave of Chu Wên, the final seal set on the forty years' feud between him and Li K'o-yung. Thus this sinister creature ended in darkness as he had begun, in the black of midnight crimes, and the milestone on the road to anarchy which he had erected in pools of the country's richest blood, collapsed completely.

A cleaner, though by no means a more solid one, was put up, that of the Latter T'angs. It remained standing for thirteen years and was in its turn knocked down by pressure from the Khitans, who replaced it by one of their own choosing, that of the Latter Chins. Probably this termination was unavoidable, given the comparative military strength of the two states, but neither did Li Ts'un-hsü as Emperor Chuang Tsung use what power he had in a way calculated to prevent it.

There was nothing of T'ang about his dynasty except the name, and attempted imitation of Ming Huang's patronage of artists only ended in his morally and politically most reprehensible intimacy with youthful mimes and musicians.

The lingering splendour of the old T'ang palace at Lo yang, to which he moved the capital, seems to have infected his former energy with a lazy desire to sprawl and do nothing but enjoy the unwonted luxuries of a truly Imperial residence. So many of the buildings which witnessed the splendour of Kao Tsung and the might of Wu Hou were still standing, Chuang Tsung's humbler Court completely failed to fill them. The empty halls were uncanny and seemed to echo with sepulchral whispers of a crowd of mocking ghosts. An eunuch suggested the remedy. Ten thousand palace ladies used to enliven them with the rustle of silken skirts, the patter of embroidered slippers, the jingle of jade bracelets, the music of their laughter and their lutes. Although in these impoverished days ten thousand were out of the question, a lesser number might be able to do all the exorcising needed. So Chuang Tsung commandeered three thousand young ladies, who with the help of minstrels and players dispelled the gloom of the half-deserted palace only too successfully. There was no longer any time left for state affairs.

An officer, Kuo Ts'ung Tao, conquered Szechuan for him, but Chuang Tsung, having fallen asleep on his own laurels, realized they were fading and felt jealous of Kuo Ts'ung Tao's fresh ones. He therefore gladly listened to calumniators who accused the victorious general of treasonable designs and had him executed with both his sons. The unjust sentence caused a mutiny among troops stationed at Yeh; those sent to punish them fraternized with them instead and acclaimed their own commander, Li Ssü-yüan, an adopted son of Li K'o-yung's, as Emperor.

He was a ripe man of sixty, hiding much genuine ability under a simple and unassuming demeanour, and undoubtedly worthier of the throne than Chuang Tsung had proved himself to be.

The latter was soon betrayed by the very men of whom he had made his boon companions. Such was the confusion of ideas at his upstart Court it was possible for a clown like Kuo Ts'ung ch'ien to fancy he would cut the right figure in Imperial robes.

He raised a riot and attacked the palace. Chuang Tsung at first succeeded in driving him off with his guards and ordered



his cavalry encamped outside the city, to hasten to his assistance. But the cavalry never moved.

Noticing which the rioters returned to the charge, and the Emperor, now also forsaken by his guards, was struck by an arrow and expired shortly afterwards. His falconer piled a quantity of musical instruments over his dead body and set it all on fire. So this strange founder of a dynasty was reduced to a pitiful heap of calcined bones to the sound of bursting strings, exploding guitars and splitting lutes.

A pandemonium of looting and burning then stormed through the palace, soldiers and rioters in gleeful possession. The whole town might have gone up in flames, if Li Ssü-yüan and his army had not arrived and restored order. He mounted the throne, the first for many years to do so with a sense of the immense responsibilities a throne implies. His seven years' reign was an oasis of prosperity in the midst of the wilderness of wars and political upheavals that preceded and followed it. Every evening he gathered his attendants round him, burnt incense and prayed:

"I, a rough man, have been placed on the throne by rebels. May Heaven soon vouchsafe a wise man to be His people's sovereign."

Careful of the country's welfare, he was most anxious to avoid war with his dangerous neighbours the Khitans. For him it was undoubtedly a great piece of luck that in 926, the year of the red dog, the day of the White Serpent, in the first month of autumn, their ever-victorious war-maker, A-pao-chi, Emperor Tai Tsu, died of a severe illness on his return from a campaign. The long period of mourning and the fact that the Empress-Dowager diverted the succession from A-pao-chi's eldest to her favourite, the younger son, Tê Kuang, who became the Emperor T'ai Tsung, for a time kept the dreaded horsemen quietly at home.

Shin Huang wang, the superseded former Prince Imperial, finding himself watched by his brother's suspicion, fled by sea and was warmly welcomed at the T'ang Court. Its Emperor, however, none the less relaxed no effort to keep on good terms with the reigning brother as well. He plied him with embassies bringing valuable presents, among them a lute studded with precious stones, and did succeed in silencing the war party, anxious to materialize A-pao-chi's dreams of conquest.

At peace with the North, Li Ssü-yüan had therefore no difficulty in stopping a Tibetan invasion from the West.

One of his last acts, the printing of the Classics, was to have the most far-reaching consequences, sowing the seeds for the

splendid intellectual achievements of the Sung period. Engraved on stone by the Hans, copies taken by rubbings had no doubt been widely spread, but neither in sufficient quantity nor in sufficiently convenient form to allow poor scholars the joy of possessing their own complete set of those wonderful books. Wood-block printing had already been in use under the Sui and it is probable that the wood-blocks from which monks multiplied prayers and magic formulas for sale among the pious, and still numerous in old Buddhist temples, have a pedigree reaching back to the seventh century if not further. But whether this process was considered too rough for the Classics, or whether the frivolous government of the last T'angs lacked the enterprise to do anything to facilitate learning, it was not before the latter T'angs of Turkish descent that the work of printing the nine Classics from wood blocks was begun. It took twenty years and was completed under the last of the five small dynasties, the Latter Chou, in 952.

Li Ssü-yüan to whom the honour of starting the momentous undertaking belongs, died in 643 and was given the name of Ming Tsung, the Enlightened Emperor.

His son Li Ts'ung-hou succeeded him on the throne, but only for a brief five months, being swept out of power and existence by Li Ts'ung-k'o, a Chinese born Wang, whom Ming Tsung, as was the tribal custom, had adopted, and who evidently possessed a more dominating personality than his luckless half-brother. Above all, he had a stronger hold both over the army and the people, neither of whom stood by the legitimate ruler. Nevertheless, his own reign was a short and very troubled one. The Khitans were on the war-path again.

Shin Huang Wang, still dwelling in Lo yang, informed his brother, the Khitan ruler, Tê Kuang, that Li Ts'ung-k'o's usurpation afforded an excellent pretext for armed intervention, the more so as one of his most powerful nobles, Shih Ching-t'ang, refused to acknowledge him. Shih Ching-t'ang was Ming Tsung's son-in-law and also of Turkish descent, which possibly accounts for the callous recklessness with which he promised the Khitans no less than sixteen Chinese towns in return for their assistance.

In the habitual manner of conquerors Tê Kuang daubed attractive moral colours over the grim brutality of his aggression, declaring :

"I am compelled to take up arms against Li Ts'ung-k'o because murdering and supplanting his Emperor he has aroused the wrath of Gods and men."



And to Shih Ching-t'ang he sent word he would join him with an army to destroy the "robber."

Between them they soon had Li Ts'ung-k'o at bay. His mounted troops, besieged in a fortified camp, were reduced to feeding their horses with a mixture of dung and sawdust. The poor creatures in their hunger bit off each other's manes and tails. Still the commander refused to give in, whereupon his subordinates murdered him and surrendered to Tê Kuang, who gave the loyal commander an honourable funeral and the 5,000 emaciated horses to Shih Ching-t'ang.

Already a few weeks previously he had proclaimed him Emperor of the great Chin dynasty and now before sending him off in final pursuit of his rival, gave him a farewell banquet, a valuable white sable, twenty excellent chargers, besides declaring him his favourite son and vowing friendship everlasting.

Meanwhile the T'ang Emperor sought to drown his troubles, and alternately drank and wept and sang all day long. When a fleeing remnant of his army brought the news to Lo yang that Shih Ching-t'ang was on their heels with a large Chinese force, supported by 5,000 Khitan horsemen, Li Ts'ung-k'o gave up hope, had Tê Kuang's brother murdered, and then taking with him his wife, his son and the precious T'ang seal, went up a tower, set it on fire and perished in the flames.

This brought the second of the five Dynasties' milestones down with a sudden crash. It had only endured fourteen years.

The next, that of the Latter Chin, erected by Shih Ching-t'ang under the wings of the Khitans, had a shorter existence still—eleven years. Tê Kuang never intended it to be more than an outpost of his own authority, the first milestone on his road to the conquest of China. He considered Shih Ching-t'ang his subject, on whom he had graciously bestowed the dominions of the Latter T'ang, that he might protect them not as a part of China, but as the southernmost frontier district of the Khitan Empire.

Shih Ching-t'ang understood the position, surrendered the sixteen cities, sent 30,000 rolls of silk, applied the oil of flattery, bestowing an endless litany of eulogistic titles on Tê Kuang and his Empress, also a book commemorating their manifold virtues and excellences, finally even buying his overlord's permission to perform the sacrifice to Heaven with 10 lb. of pure gold.

But the position was extremely galling and threatened to become untenable when Khitan oppression in the ceded terri-

tory drove one of the towns to open revolt and return to her natural allegiance. The movement was premature and failed terribly. The entire male population of the city was butchered and thirty families were dragged away into Khitan slavery.

This severity exasperated the Chinese war-party.

Its leader actually rebelled against Shih Ching-t'ang when he found he could not move him from his policy of peace. He was defeated and his embalmed head sent as a practical token of apology to the Khitan overlord. But the anxiety all this caused brought on an illness of which Shih Ching-t'ang died, having ruled as well as the difficulties of the times permitted for seven years.

The difficulties steadily increasing, his ministers decided to put his nephew Shih Ch'ung-kuei, a grown man, on the throne instead of his son who was only a small boy. The new Emperor seems at once to have been won by the war party, in their patriotic ardour magnifying their own resources and minimizing those of the enemy. He sounded a note of defiance in the very first message he sent to Tê Kuang announcing his uncle's decease and his own accession. He signed himself—the Khitan Emperor's grandson, not subject. Tê Kuang immediately made this a pretext for war, which he began all the more readily since he knew China had been grievously weakened that very year by floods and locusts.

In the first month of 944 with an army of 50,000 men he successfully began the struggle which soon became very bitter.

The Khitans had expected an easy victory, and when they found the Chinese putting up a determined and skilful resistance their rage knew no limits. They massacred the entire population of every city they took, branded any poor peasant they seized in the face, and burned their trail into the country-side with black streaks of desolation. Shih Ch'ung-kuei, realizing that his material resources could not stand the strain of a protracted war, sent messenger after messenger offering peace and restoration of the former friendship.

But Tê Kuang, out for revenge and conquest, refused all such offers, even after a severe defeat he suffered at the hands of the Chinese, who breaking through flaming palisades in a howling dust-storm with day as dark as night, fell on his troops and by the vehemence of their onslaught, scattered them in ignominious rout. Tê Kuang, himself nearly caught, had to abandon his carriage, and continue his flight on a pack camel.

He vented his anger on those of his officers who had not fought as valiantly as they should by condemning them to a



hundred blows of the bamboo. To those who had pleased him he gave a big banquet, as well as to the men.

Though defeated he could afford banquets. His enemy, though victorious, could not.

In a frantic effort to raise revenue, Shih Ch'ung-kuei authorized thirty-six commissioners to extract all the wealth they could out of the propertied classes. Aided by hungry local satellites these thirty-six invaded the houses of the rich with rope and hangman threatening immediate execution, in case of refusal to hand over every available asset. Such burglarious proceedings naturally produced widespread discontent. This Turkish Chin Emperor was, after all, not the right leader for a war of liberation from the hereditary foe. And when, in addition, the Yellow River burst its dikes to the north of the new capital, Pien Liang, inflicting immense losses in life and property, enthusiasm for the war dropped to zero.

When Tê Kuang opened his third campaign in 946 he only met with feeble, spiritless resistance.

Finally, three Chinese generals surrendered with an army of no less than 200,000 men, an act of treachery which sealed the fate of the Chin Emperor. Kneeling in the dust, dressed in the simplest manner, he received Tê Kuang's vanguard and humbly confessed himself guilty, as the defeated are so often asked to do. His capital was handed over to the tender mercies of the barbarian soldiers. At last, on New Year's Day, 947, Tê Kuang, in the full pride of his victory, held his triumphal entry into the city which he now gripped like a tiger in his claws.

The miserable Shih Ch'ung-kuei had once again to renew his humiliation publicly. Bound with ropes and leading a sheep, he prostrated himself before the victor and repeated the confession of his guilt. Tê Kuang, seeing he was cowed into absolute harmlessness, settled him with his family in a distant Khitan township with the contemptuous title of Fu I hou, Marquis Ungrateful, and a small court of fifty female servants, three eunuchs, fifty coolies, seven cooks, three butlers, three coachmen and ten guards. There, in those wind-swept wilds, the second and last Emperor of the Latter Chins lived on a little, a feeble guttering candle, and went out at last into darkness unnoticed, unremembered.

His dynasty made by the Khitans had to fall when fighting against them, for it lacked all roots of its own in China.

War-weary and poverty-stricken, that country would undoubtedly have quietly submitted to the Khitan Emperor, if he had had the intelligence to use his victory with the modera-

tion and humanity which alone could render it permanent. Instead he saw in it nothing but an opportunity for gratifying greed and vindictiveness to the utmost. He first disarmed his new subjects and then too stingy to pay his soldiers himself, let them loose on the defenceless population. On pretence of cutting grass for their horses, they cut down the peasants, plundering, beating, killing, and "pitching the old and the weak into ditches and holes. From the eastern to the western capital hundreds of miles were scraped clean of all provisions and domestic animals." But this was not enough, for Tê Kuang, with a thoroughness almost approximating modern methods, stripped the defeated of all they still possessed in money, goods and valuables. Left without anything to live on, thousands perished in despair and misery ; others, deprived of the basis of social morality—assured means of subsistence—drifted into lawlessness and crime. Consequently the wretched country groaned under the double scourge of a brutal foreign army of occupation and desperate robber gangs of its own blood. What did Tê Kuang care ?

Could he not feast his eyes on gold and silver, and in a manner never experienced before let rubies, pearls and emerald jade slide through his greedy fingers ? And had he not accumulated a hoard which must make his dynasty the Iron one or the Great Liao, as he called it from that date, rich and strong for at least 100 years ?



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LATTER HAN AND LATTER CHOU DYNASTIES

SO Tê Kuang held high state in the palace of Pien Liang distributing honours and offices to his relations and favourites. These, totally ignorant of the language and laws of their new subjects, proved yet another and the most trying curse of all. In a short while their mismanagement drove the exasperation of the subjugated to breaking-point. Some cities murdered their Khitan governors, a robber chief-tain surprised a Khitan garrison and wiped it out. Such convulsions of despair and hatred shook the country, Tê Kuang began to feel it quaking underneath his newly-won throne.

What made the agitation dangerous was that an able leader, Liu Chih-yüan, took over its direction. Governor of Ho-Tung in Shansi under the Chins, he was apparently too strong for Tê Kuang to deprive him at once of his post. Cautiously the two men watched each other.

Liu Chih-yüan, biding his time, simulated friendship and sent the Liao Emperor magnificent furs and a valuable horse. But the Emperor, noticing that he did not bring these gifts himself, sent back word asking what he was waiting for since he did not seem to serve either the northern or the southern empire.

Liu Chih-yüan knew what he was waiting for—first that the measure of hatred caused by Tê Kuang's cruelty and rapacity should be full to overflowing, secondly that the warm spring weather melting ice and snow should tempt the barbarians back to their northern pasture grounds. But his own soldiers forced his hands and in a turmoil of patriotic enthusiasm shouted themselves hoarse acclaiming him Emperor with loud cries of 10,000 years of life. Their cheers drowned his suggestion to begin with the humbler title of "Prince" till victory over the Khitans looked a little less problematical. They insisted on having their way, and they were right. In those days and circumstances political cohesion was impossible without that great symbol of the will to unity and service, a paramount Head of the State.

So the governor of Ho-Tung called himself the "Emperor

pacifying the North " and became the founder of a new dynasty. He gave it the name of Han, because his family name was Liu and perhaps also in some vague hope that the Kao Tsu of the great Hans would rise out of his grave in anger at its being trampled on by the hoofs of barbarian robbers, and assist this lesser Han Kao Tsu in his war of liberation. And surely his reawakening echoes of Han power in the people's hearts rallied thousands to his flag.

In an extraordinarily short time he was in command of such a formidable army, the Khitans demoralized by months of plundering and far more anxious to secure their loot than to fight, began to beat a hasty retreat.

Tê Kuang, with the germs of mortal sickness probably already in him, seems to have been unable to arrest this movement. He inflicted what harm he still could on the country which he knew was slipping from his grasp.

All the Chin officials he could seize, palace women and eunuchs and numbers of artisans were dragged off to his northern capital. All the maps, calendars, registers, the whole paraphernalia of Imperial display were sent there too with the rest of the loot.

Then he left Pien Liang. He had obtained all the wealth of the conquered, but the main thing, their hearts, he had lost utterly and with them any chance of realizing his father's and his own dream of a Khitan dynasty sitting on the throne of the T'angs.

Too late he cursed himself for having erred thrice, first in allowing his army to plunder, secondly in having stripped the people of all their possessions, thirdly in not having organized an efficient administration. It was a death-bed repentance.

In the fourth month he passed away at the early age of forty-six.

His death, like that of his father's twenty years earlier, was a real godsend to the northern provinces of China. Without the confusion occasioned by the rivalry between Tê Kuang's two heirs, his nephew and his son, which kept the Khitans fully occupied at home, the new dynastic milestone put up by Liu Chih-yüan might have been knocked down even sooner than it was. Lucky as regards external pressure, it was unlucky in every other respect. Death had removed the Khitan danger, but early in 948 it removed Liu Chih-yüan himself, his work only just begun, the country still bleeding from a thousand wounds, and feverish with the lawlessness and mad ambitions prolonged wars and unstable political conditions inevitably produce.



Perhaps feeling that his time was short, he had issued hasty and violent edicts against robbers, declaring the pettiest theft a capital crime and with his last breath advised his ministers to make short work with Tu Chung-wei, who as a brother-in-law of the founder of the Chin dynasty, might attempt to seize the throne. To prevent which Liu Chih-yüan's ministers, keeping their master's death secret, entrapped and killed him. His body cut into a thousand pieces flung to the market mob, was devoured by it. Barbarization had evidently proceeded apace.

Even Liu Ch'êng-yu, the dead Emperor's son and successor, was nothing but a brutal sensualist. His family's sudden elevation seems to have gone to his head. Begotten, born and bred in the mephitic atmosphere of war, he could see nothing in power except unlimited licence for gratifying his desires, seldom reasonable ones at eighteen.

He did one good thing though,—he gave the many corpses left rotting on the ground since the Khitan war, proper burial. Kindly monks had already buried 200,000.

Nevertheless, unappeased ghosts started haunting the Palace. Gusts of wind blowing from nowhere would burst doors open or shut them with terrifying bangs. One heavily padlocked gate was lifted out of its hinges and hurled away a distance of ten feet. Mighty trees were uprooted in the grounds. The Supreme Whiteness—Venus—was seen to shine at noon. Clearly something was rotten in the state of the Latter Han.

The four imperial tutors at once put their fingers on the sore spot, the young Emperor's conduct, which was frankly scandalous. They had the courage to tell him so. He promptly had three of them killed. The fourth, Kuo Wei, one of his father's ablest and most loyal supporters, fortunately for him, happened to be out of immediate reach, at Yeh in command of the garrison. Liu Ch'êng-yu therefore dispatched ministers to silence his unwelcome criticism for ever.

But Kuo Wei was surrounded by adoring soldiers and officers. Roused by his danger they insisted on his leading them to the capital to rid the Emperor of the camarilla who had advised the monstrous crime of their beloved general's assassination.

News of the advance preceding, and all the garrisons on the way joining them, the guards at Pien Liang, probably with grievances of their own, mutinied and killed the foolish youth who disgraced the throne.

With Kuo Wei's sanction the Empress-Dowager declared another Han Prince, Liu Pin, governor of Han Chou, Emperor.

But the roll of Khitan war-drums interrupted all these

proceedings and sent Kuo Wei marching against the dreaded invaders. These finding little to loot, contented themselves with a slave-raid and retired. But Kuo Wei's soldiers, in the excitement of all these marchings, tore a yellow flag off its staff, threw it round him and acclaimed him their Emperor.

The will of the Army being the will of the people, Kuo Wei accepted the honour thrust upon him, but without any illusions as to the weight of the burdens it placed on his shoulders. Claiming descent from a brother of the great Wên Wang he called the dynasty Chou. But it was not to inherit a fraction of the ancient Chou's longevity, since it only added an extra six years to the paltry four allowed the dynasty he had displaced.

The Latter Chou milestone remained a stunted embryo of no importance in itself, but of the utmost value as a thorough and very ably directed preparation for the radiant milestone of the Sung. Of the two ruling Chou Emperors, the second energetically enlarged the physical frontiers of Imperial authority, the first guided it back to the eternal Tao from which it had strayed so long.

One of Kuo Wei's first acts was to clear the palace of all the luxuries, worse than useless in the denuded state of the country, on which young Liu Ch'êng-yu had wasted time and money.

Born in poverty, reared in adversity, the new Emperor had a tender heart for the people's sufferings, declined all costly gifts and forbade the introduction into the palace of anything merely ornamental and out of keeping with the simplicity he was determined to uphold.

His second great act of truly organic reconstruction was the public homage he rendered to the memory of K'ung Tzŭ, when he visited the solemn precincts of his Temple and his tomb. This, joined in the same year to the publication of the whole of the Classics in copies printed from wood-blocks begun under the Latter T'angs, amounted to a declaration of policy. A conscious return was to be made to the purest source of Chinese greatness, the ethics of their ancient Sages, and their harmonious interpretation of the principles uniting Heaven, Earth and Man. The fantasies of pseudo-Taoist occultism and Tantric Buddhism were no longer to wax rich and powerful by Imperial patronage.

Kuo Wei's successor, his adopted son, Kuo Jung, went even further, though as was perhaps inevitable in his war-filled reign, more on the negative side of mere repression of the less desirable forms of worship. Towards monasticism his attitude came dangerously near rapacious intolerance. Needing metal



to mint the cash which Khitan raids had rendered inconveniently scarce, he ordered all brass and copper or bronze objects except bells, gongs, ritual vessels and weapons, to be handed over within fifty days. Anyone found with more than 5 lb. of metal in his possession after that term incurred the death penalty. Buddhist Temples still rich in bronze statuary were hit exceedingly hard, and the damage inflicted on art must have been lamentably great.

The same Emperor also closed 30,000 Buddhist Temples and declared the taking of monastic vows illegal without a government licence and the sanction of parents, grandparents and uncles. This measure was dictated by his need of recruits for his army, and synchronized with a general ebbtide in the power of Buddhism due on the one hand to its elimination from the lands of its birth and greatest development, Northern India and Central Asia, on the other to a quickened interest in their own spiritual treasures by the Chinese.

But with separatism still tearing huge fissures through the unity of their civilization, the most urgent problem confronting the Chous was the maintenance or rectification of frontiers.

Once firmly established on the throne Yeh-lü Yüan, Tai Tsung's nephew, began to think of resuming the Khitan tradition of plundering China.

To prevent this Kuo Wei at once sent him an embassy to announce his accession, an act of courtesy which the Liao Emperor graciously acknowledged by the gift of a beautiful horse. But their pleasant duologue was sadly jangled by a third party—Liu Ch'ung, a prince of the dispossessed Han, who, strongly entrenched behind the walls of Tai Yüan, considered himself their rightful heir and legitimate Emperor of the Northern Han. He appealed to the Liao Emperor for armed assistance, promising in return to become his vassal or his son according to the fashionable euphuism.

Pretexts for interference in the affairs of a disunited country mostly opening up dazzling vistas of lucrative plunder are seldom missed. Yeh-lü Yüan decided to support this new son of his against Kuo Wei and began to march South at the head of a large army.

But once again death frustrated Khitan dreams of conquest. The Liao Emperor was assassinated by a noble coveting the treasures inherited from the loot of Pien Liang. A curse seemed to go with them, for this man too, having got possession of one of the choicest pieces—a cup of carnelian,—was seized by the adherents of the murdered Emperor's house and sliced to pieces alive, all his children being killed too.

The succession went to T'ai Tsung's eldest son Yeh-lü Kung, who became the Emperor Mu Tsung.

All this took time to settle. The expedition against Chou was stopped, which emboldened Kuo Wei to become the aggressor.

He had, however, to withdraw. A few months later he died of the heart disease that had troubled him a long time. Fortunately, he had chosen his successor, his brother-in-law, Ch'ai Shou li's son, Kuo Jung, well and had besides initiated him in the difficult business of ruling, thus avoiding any breach of continuity in the dynasty's policy which his death might otherwise have entailed.

Kuo Jung was an able and ambitious general, who believed he could best protect his frontiers by enlarging them, if possible, to the extent of the whole of China. This would have taken many years to accomplish. Fate only granted him five.

But in that short time he did achieve a great deal, and thoroughly prepared the ground for the unification which the Sung completed. He was fortunate in finding only a lazy unintelligent adversary in his most dangerous neighbour's ruler, the Khitan Emperor Mu Tsung, who steadily degenerated into a cruel drunken brute.

He would spend days imbibing huge quantities of wine and spirits. Government affairs had to settle themselves. Nevertheless, Khitan man-power remained a formidable force which the separate little states, the Southern T'ang, the Northern Han, the Western Shu, with their usual unpatriotic selfishness, were eager to enlist on their side against the one state Chou, that manfully stood up for the only way to secure China's freedom from outside domination—unity.

The Southern T'ang sent Mu Tsung 10,000 cuirasses of rhinoceros hide with urgent appeals for help; the Northern Han, with similar whines, offered to restore the pailou which the Chins had erected in Tê Kuang's honour and which the Chous had destroyed.

For Kuo Jung had attacked them both, and boldly sent his forces even further afield against Shu, from which he conquered three districts. From the Southern T'ang he took seven; many cities from the Northern Han. He might have wiped out the latter entirely if the Khitans, perhaps made invulnerable by those 10,000 rhinoceros-hide cuirasses, had not appeared on the scene.

They beat the Chous and plundered the Hans, and then went home, as Mu Tsung was far more interested in hunting and



drinking than in campaigning. Kuo Jung, however, was indefatigable.

Balked in the North he redoubled his efforts in the South against the T'angs.

These, under their ancestor Li Pien of the Imperial Li stock, had come into possession of the principality of Wu, which at the break-up of the T'ang Empire had grown into a sovereign state around the Lower Yangtze, and were now trying to expand northwards and southwards.

Assuming the Imperial title, they were clearly making a bid for the supreme leadership of the nation, a claim Kuo Jung, master of the old T'ang capital, would not tolerate for a moment. But the Southern T'angs held their Court in what also had been an Imperial residence, Chiang ling, the modern Nanking.

It was a place rich with memories of the great Liang Wu Ti. These seem to have haunted and filled them with a devotion to Buddhism almost equal to his.

True to the best T'ang tradition they also favoured art and poetry. Their last sovereign, Li Hou-chu, was himself a gifted poet and so fastidious in his taste nothing but perfection of form and texture would satisfy him in the things he used. The paper on which he wrote his graceful lyrics was specially made for him in the Hall of Untroubled Thought, and so faultlessly, it came to be eagerly sought after by the painters and calligraphists of the next century.

Much of the elegance and refinement that were to characterize the Court of the Sungs can be traced to the fashions he set, as, for instance, the institution of an Academy of Painting under direct Imperial patronage. Indeed his Court with its cult of beauty spiritualized by artistic ability and intellectual vision, its halls of sculptured sandal-wood, its lily-footed ladies waving moon fans with delicate bejewelled hands, formed a staggering contrast to the Court of the Iron Dynasty—if that crude mixture of nomad camp-life, borrowed ceremonial and stolen splendour, gorging and guzzling and hunting the only amusements, could be called by so dignified a name.

The Court of the Chous, placed between the two, combined the military vigour of the latter with the mental grasp of the former, and therefore became the power which was to deprive both of the fulfilment of their imperialistic ambition.

In three campaigns Kuo Jung, finally pitching his camp on the bank of the Yangtze right opposite Chiang ling, knocked all claims to independence and to power north of the River out of the T'ang ruler, at that time Li Ching, father and predecessor

of Li Hou-chu. Convinced of the Chous' power he declared himself willing to acknowledge their suzerainty and to forego all alliances with the Liaos.

Not that Liao friendship amounted to much just then. Mu Tsung grew daily more drunk, more violent, more neglectful of state affairs. Hearing which, and having obtained the peace he wanted from the Southern T'angs, Kuo Jung hastened north to punish the Khitans for a raid on a frontier-town they had committed the year before.

He occupied three of their passes, stormed two of their fortified boroughs and was preparing to plunge deep into their country when the strain of all this campaigning, which within a few months took him from the relaxing climate of the Yangtze to the sharp winds howling round the Great Wall, broke his over-taxed body.

Sick unto death he turned homewards and died in the sixth month of 959 at the early age of thirty-eight. According to his last instructions his son, Kuo Tsung hun, succeeded him, but he was only a child of six crumpled beneath the heavy folds of the ceremonial robes into a tiny corner of the great Dragon Throne. It was impossible for him to fill it and replace his energetic father. Yet the times were critical and in urgent need of a strong man at the helm. Kuo Jung had roused a wasps' nest when he attacked the Khitans. They came swarming over the frontier, as usual, in close alliance with the Northern Han.

One of the late Emperor's favourite generals, Chao K'uang-yin, was placed in supreme command of the army by the Empress-Dowager.

He started to march against the invaders. However, at the very first halting-place his officers and his brother Chao P'u conspired to proclaim him Emperor. During the night, while he was lying fast asleep after a convivial supper, they surrounded his tent and sent word to their fellow-conspirators in Pien Liang. At dawn they woke him and with drawn swords declared that being governed by a little child who did not know them, they were practically leaderless; it was his duty as their general to rise still higher and become their Emperor.

Chao K'uang-yin seems to have been completely taken by surprise and was still rubbing the sleep out of his eyes while they decked him with a robe of Imperial yellow, saluted him Emperor and placed him on his horse. Instead of proceeding against the Khitans, they turned South towards the capital. This business of changing the dynasty, once set on foot, had to



be carried through as speedily as possible or heads might fall condemned as those of traitors.

But it all got settled most pleasantly, without the shedding of one drop of blood. It is doubtful whether there even was any shedding of tears.

Chao K'uang-yin was a family friend of the Chous and not a hard man to obey. Before reaching the capital he made his officers solemnly promise not to hurt a hair on the head of the little Emperor or of the Empress-Dowager or of any of his former colleagues, the ministers. Neither was a thing to be taken from the Imperial storehouses and arsenals. Consequently the worst that befell Kuo Tsung hun was that he had to climb from that great draughty throne and renounce being the official figure-head. He and the Empress-Dowager were given appropriate titles and peacefully merged into the aristocracy which Chao K'uang-yin's genial personality rallied without an effort to the support of the new dynasty.

Thus in the first month of 960 he became the Emperor T'ai Tsu and the Sung milestone replaced that of the Latter Chou.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE NORTHERN SUNG DYNASTY

**T**HE change was carried out with the utmost gentleness. Yet it proved to be far more than a change of a dynasty. It was a change from sixty years of confusion, weakness and separatism to unity, greatness, and such achievements in philosophy and art as render the Sung period, though neither the strongest nor the happiest stage in the long life of Chinese culture, quite one of the most indispensable.

It was an age that placed poets and artists in the seats of the mighty, that reverently gathered whatever the nation in the travail of millenniums had won of insight, knowledge and illumination, studying it with an understanding deepened by long training in the wisdom of India, building shrines around it of its own design to make it visible to all and shelter it against the breaking of the northern storm.

It was an age of such intellectual vigour it lightly carried the splendid burden of the accumulations of past labour and the gifts of its own courageous explorations. The bold straight horizontals of the Emperor's black head-dress sweeping half a foot beyond the shoulders, the grave simplicity of their robes, the pensive expression of their aristocratic faces, all reveal the fearless originality, the assured poise, the artistic orientation of the prevalent mentality.

The purity of shape, material, glaze and colour of Sung ceramics tells the same tale. Already under the Latter Han, if no earlier, porcelain of clearest resonance and superb glazing had been manufactured, and the second Emperor of the Latter Chou gave his family name Ch'ai to a ware so wonderful it is described as "blue as heaven after rain, as bright as a mirror, as thin as paper and as resonant as are musical stones of jade." Even fragments of it were eagerly sought after, mounted in buckles and worn as priceless amulets.

These early porcelains were the parents of those choice bowls, plates and vases steeped in soft glossiness of creamy whites, hyacinth blues and purples, tender lavenders and greens, here and there splashed with a vibrant ruby jet, made under the



Sung both at private and at Imperial kilns. The one which was to obtain universal fame as the best porcelain factory of the world—Ching Tê Hsien—derived its name from the reign title of the third Sung Emperor.

There was a similar continuity of achievement in other arts and handicrafts, for notwithstanding its multitudinous confusions the Five Dynasties period was not a morass of utter darkness, rather a bridge somewhat shaky in parts yet never broken, over which much of the greatness of the T'angs crossed over to produce that of the Sung.

Li Ch'êng, one of the most stimulating of the Sung artists, was born amid all the tumult of the Five Dynasties' chaos, his family, blood relations of the Imperial Lis, fleeing from the old T'ang capital, Ch'ang-an, to Shantung.

Another, Tung Yüan, painter of autumn mist and distant views, was an official of the Latter T'ang and his more famous follower, the monk Chü Jan, was a subject of the Southern T'angs, and followed Li Hou-chu, the last of its sovereigns, north to the Court of the Sung after his final defeat at their hands (975).

These artists, combining technical mastery with unparalleled depth of emotion and concentration of thought, began that succession of painters who opened up worlds of such ineffable beauty, one realizes they represent an utmost attainment, an ultimate height, human effort cannot transcend. For the taste of the Sung as that of the T'ang period, which in many ways it completed and prolonged, turned whole-heartedly to painting as its highest and most satisfying activity.

The spirit of triumphant self-assertion, which produces great architecture, could not arise at a time when national safety and sovereignty cowered under constant threats of alien aggression. The ebbing of Buddhist fervour, the impoverishment of the country, the sight of the ruins that had overtaken the most magnificent mausoleums, diverted serious thought from sculpture and discouraged any demand for strong and original work.

In poetry men's ears were still intoxicated with the divine strains of the T'ang masters and could tolerate nothing different. But in painting, especially in black and white, T'ang artists, far from having exhausted, had only opened boundless possibilities. One could study and copy them to satiety and then discover methods, moods and melodies never used or sung before. Thus painting became the magic well from which the joy of discovery, the wonder of revelation, the awe of final mysteries poured forth in a deep and vitalizing flow.

Tragedy was the new thing that broke upon the vision of the Sung artists with all the force of an unexpected dawn. The epic, the lyric, the comic, the gruesome, power and humility, ferocity and meekness, active vigour, contemplative repose, beauty and ugliness, all these had been expressed in Chinese art before, different periods emphasizing the one or the other.

It was the Sung masters who first visualized the poignant grief hidden in the heart of life's creative joy. And they pictured it in mountain summits desolate amidst wild storms, in pines wind-twisted and smitten with old age that must surely turn to death, in mists dissolving into nothingness, in man gazing out into infinitude whose vastness dooms his loftiest aspirations to halt for ever broken-winged before the unattainable.

There were many reasons for this awakening to a sense of the tragic blank behind all the sunshine in a god-created world. The fall of the T'ang Empire not only was a gigantic tragedy but was felt as such by men whom the refinement of T'ang culture had rendered intensely sensitive to the deeper meaning of events. The destruction of the Han Empire, though actually quite as catastrophic, had not produced the same resonance in the souls of the people, partly because they were emotionally and intellectually considerably less highly strung, partly because the golden Gods of Buddhism came to them with outstretched hands full of comfort, pity and new riches, making up for almost all their losses.

But when the T'angs perished a dimness had fallen on those radiant Gods, their promises of constant help and of a glorious paradise had worn too thin to hide the terrors of the existing misery, while the wisdom of the ancient Sages, dropped out of fashion, was left to stagnate unproductively on the shelves of rare and seldom visited libraries.

Lost in a world politically and intellectually shaken to its foundations, surrounded by danger, filled with despair, artists and thinkers found deliverance by bursting the bounds of personal anguish and merging it in the universal sorrow of all that is transient, unstable, forsaken, or too intensely beautiful in an Universe where movement is life, fixity—death.

It has been said that the absence of great tragedies in their literature indicates a lack of the dramatic sense in the Chinese. But the fact is that instead of writing their great tragedies they painted them, drew them on high panels which lift the spectator from restless turmoil of down-flowing waters to the stupendous calm brooding on heights steeped in the void of outermost space; they evoked them on long entrancing scrolls, which



carry eyes and thoughts ever forward through changing panoramas of sheltered hamlets, blossoming orchards, towering pagodas, bridges, inns, fortified passes, to end in the wistfulness of distances so elusive, the brush can only adumbrate them with faint streaks of dreamy blues.

For distance in the thought of the Sung period no longer meant new roads to travel, new ranges to climb, new countries to explore, new maps to mark out, as it had done to the buoyant adventurousness of the early T'ang centuries. The orientation of mental growth having changed from an external, concrete widening to an inward, abstract deepening, distance had come to signify the immensity of the eternal and the absolute, the ultimate remoteness which no exploration can reach, which even imagination can only suggest in faltering symbols.

The steps by which this striking change was reached had not been easy ones to tread. Surrounded by the ruins of an Empire, where everything had to be set up and thought out anew, the widespread material and mental misery might have hardened into stagnant hopelessness, if the publication of the printed Classics had not roused minds, to whom they had been only remotely accessible before, with the clarion call of an instant summons to thought and action. The unfailing applicability of this ancient wisdom, the dignity of its language, the charm of the ethical types it held up as a guide and a model blazed through the miasma of despondency with the beaconlight of a harbour it was possible and extraordinarily worth while to reach.

And straightway men dreaming in old monasteries, teaching in schools, toiling in government offices set about this splendid work of reacquiring their great spiritual heritage. Scholars brooding over the occult science of the Book of Mutations found in it the same ultimate infinitude which haunted artists in their visualization of hills and streams.

One master mind, that of Chou Tun-i, evolved from the T'ai Chi, the extreme limit mentioned there, a philosophy about the baffling mystery of the beginning of creation, which is more satisfactory and has stood the test of increased accumulations of accurately known facts better than the more elaborate systems of Western metaphysicians. And Chou Tun-i, or Chou Tzū, as he came to be called, did not only trace the invisible yet ever present road, the Tao of all happenings, to its furthest thinkable source, but being a practical teacher also, he made the old road of man clear again and tempting to walk on. In his interpretation of the Book of Mutations he merged the foundation of moral excellence—sincerity, in the ultimate infinite from

which the Universe with its ceaseless pulsation of energy and inertia, day and night, life and death, arose.

To aspire to righteousness, therefore, did not imply eccentricity, nor oblige one, as was the case under Buddhist teaching, to cut oneself off from the customary life of one's fellow-beings. On the contrary, it linked the individual to the vast forces guiding and sustaining the boundless complexity of things and made it possible for the smallest unit to draw upon the stupendous power of the whole. This power was in its inmost nature held to be purely ethical. Aware that continuous lapses from the Royal Road of Man lay at the root of the T'ang Empire's collapse, Chou Tun-i insisted on the need of cultivating conscience, for without the discrimination between right and wrong conscience alone assures, men cease to respond to the teaching of the Universe, which, being moral, inevitably destroys whoever, falling out of harmony with its eternal laws, attempts to lead an egocentric, unethical existence.

With all the force of his eloquence and his own example Chou Tun-i swept the dust of neglect from the old ideal of the Chün tze and demonstrated that the highest honour, the truest blessedness can only be obtained by following it, by persistently endeavouring to be benevolent and loyal, just yet lenient, sincere yet conciliatory.

Nor did his teaching fall on barren ground. He had contemporaries like Shao Yung pursuing the same line of thought, and pupils like the three Ch'êngs, who on his foundations, built up that profound and harmonious interpretation of the principles of Nature, to which the able hands of Chu Hsi, the latest born of the five great Sung philosophers, gave such a comprehensive finish, it carried its own light and that of the most potent of its inspiring sources, the wisdom of the ancient Sages, safely through eight troubled centuries.

As the philosopher urged the people back to the moral road of man, so the sovereign by the weight of his example guided the monarchy back to the moral road of Kings.

For it was Chao Kuang-yin's close approximation to the old national ideal, his sincerity, his kindness, his generosity, the simplicity of his habits, the shrewdness of his judgments, which produced that atmosphere of conciliation in which alone a permanent settlement of his country could be reached.

Owing his elevation to the throne to his officers, he realized that what they had made they could unmake. Kao Tsu, the founder of the Han dynasty in a similar dilemma, settled it in his rough and brutal way by killing and making war on his old associates. But the great humanizing influence of K'ung Tzū's



teachings, of Buddha's religion of mercy and of T'ang art and poetry lay between the two dates. After all the instability and violence of the last sixty years, an immense war-weariness, an intense longing for peace and concord was the prevalent national mood and would have condemned the initiator of civil war to paralysing unpopularity. Nor was Chao Kuang-yin the man willingly to resort to warlike measures.

Yet the question of how without the use of force to reduce his generals' power sufficiently to remove all temptation to disloyalty was difficult. Chao Kuang-yin solved it in his genial and statesmanlike way. He gave them a splendid banquet, plied them with wine and in the festive mood thus engendered, induced them to lay down their high commands voluntarily and retire into a private life which his liberality made extremely pleasant. Thus without quarrels or friction of any kind he turned potential rivals into staunch supporters.

Another wise measure he immediately took was the endowment of schools, to all of which he presented portraits of the national Sages. He wrote a panegyric on K'ung Tzŭ, knelt in his Temple in Chü-fu, meditated in the solemn silence round his grave. He knew that no work of unification and reconstruction could possess either permanence or reality unless based on the profound knowledge, the rich experience of this master teacher.

Therefore, to combat the illiteracy brought about by the semi-barbaric dynasties and the general poverty of those troubled times, he favoured learned candidates not only in the civil service but instituted a literary examination adapted to military requirements as well.

He also began that patronage of artists which, culminating in the artist Emperor Hui Tsung, attached one of the strongest interests, the pursuit of art, to the dynasty and gave it a popularity which enabled it to survive the catastrophe of 1127.

But the main problem facing any dynasty aspiring to strength, security and permanence was the unification of China, for which, in view of the dangerous Khitan pressure on the northern frontiers, there was an increasingly active desire and which his early death had prevented Kuo Jung from realizing.

The Sung Emperor's efforts to break the independence of the Northern Hans were foiled by the Khitans who assisted them with large contributions of men, horses and grain.

But against the other separate states, who lacked that backing, he was able by a judicious mixture of force and suasion to carry out his centralizing policy. The last to be absorbed were the Southern T'angs, against whom he sent an able commander, Ts'ao Pin. On the first day of the siege of the T'ang capital,

Chin ling, he withdrew into his tent under plea of severe sickness.

Alarmed, his officers came to inquire. Whereupon he told them his illness was not of the kind that could be cured by drugs—only one thing could make him recover, their promise not to slay a single individual once the city was in their hands.

Knowing it would run counter to their beloved Emperor's policy of conciliation to act otherwise, they gave the desired promise, ratifying it with vows and the burning of incense.

Wherefore, when two days later their troops marched victoriously through the open gates, there was no looting or killing. On the contrary, 100,000 measures of rice were brought in to relieve the famine from which the town was suffering. Nor was any damage done to any of the temples and palaces with which the Southern T'angs had beautified their capital.

Li Hou-chu was given the derisive title of Marquis resisting fate, but otherwise honourably treated. He came to the Sung Court bringing with him the artist Tung Yü, who was soon given the congenial task of decorating the walls of an Imperial pavilion with the dragons for which he was celebrated. He met congenial company, too, for Chao Kuang-yin loved to gather the best minds of the country round him.

Among others he had summoned to Pien Liang, the portraitist Yüan Ai, a Buddhist monk, was the most famous and has recorded a charming impression he got as he first saw the Son of Heaven "just coming back from enjoying the spring in the garden behind the palace, wearing a black cap in which were stuck some flowers, an expression of gladness lighting up his naturally beautiful countenance."

Possibly the excellent portrait still extant of this great founder of a great dynasty is by Yüan Ai. It shows a middle-aged man grown somewhat stout with much sedentary work, the furrows of concentrated thought engraved between heavy eyebrows, the observant deep-lidded eyes of a statesman, the generous slightly aquiline nose characteristic of all the Sungs, a firm yet highly sensitive mouth, the massive jaws of a rich vitality and a general appearance of unfailing reserves of patience, kindness, insight, strength, sincerity, typical of that new and beautiful variation on the theme of the Chün tze rooted in a close study of Confucianism through the mellowing atmosphere of Buddhist imagination.

Nor did Chao Kuang-yin's actions belie the big-heartedness indicated by his features. Full of a deep regard for the value of each individual human life, he forbade any ill-considered infliction of the death penalty and ordered all such sentences



to be referred to a court of appeal in the capital with the evidence on which they were based. Only when this was found sufficient the sentence could be carried out.

This wise measure had the double advantage of promoting a humane handling of justice and of placing a curb on the autocratic power of provincial governors.

Other instances of his impulsive generosity are recorded, like his throwing the four gates of his palace facing the four quarters of space, wide open, because his house, like his heart, should never be closed to supplicants wheresoever they came from. In a severe winter during which his army was battling in the North with those terrible neighbours, the Khitans, he took off his own fur-lined coat and sent it to the general-in-command, saying he only wished he could give one to every soldier.

This story is interesting from another view-point also. It helps to explain why the Sungs finally became tributary to the Liao.

Their soldiers were inadequately equipped, and therefore particularly in winter fought at a great disadvantage against the hardier and better-clad barbarians.

Luckily for the new dynasty, as long as the tipsy Mu Tsung sat or rather lurched about on the Liao throne, the worst they could do was to prevent the annexation of the Northern Han territory.

Several tribes, tired of being ruled by a drunken brute, seceded and started robbing the Khitans' cattle. In addition, serious droughts considerably reduced the fighting power of their strongest weapon, the cavalry.

The remedies Mu Tsung tried were peculiar. One consisted in his courtiers splashing each other with water. The second prescribed that he himself should canoe about in a shallow pond praying for rain. His prayer not being answered at once, he climbed out of the canoe into the water, which feat apparently so touched the Dragon of the Clouds he sent some to earth in a beneficent downpour.

It was a misfortune for the Sungs that this inefficient, unpopular ruler was murdered in 968 while out bear-hunting and replaced by his energetic cousin Yeh-lü Hsien, who became the Emperor Ching Tsung.

At first though, relations with him were quite good. In 974 Chao Kuang-yin sent him an embassy with proposals of lasting friendship, which were accepted. But the government of China was not to remain much longer in Chao Kuang-yin's able hands.

In the fourth month of 976 he visited Lo yang and in the southern suburb sacrificed to Heaven. The citizens wept for joy to see an Emperor, and such an Emperor, amongst them again at last. Their town, unlike Ch'ang-an, mutilated beyond repair by Chu Wên, had preserved some of its ancient splendour and possessed temples in which frescoes by no less a brush than Wu Tao Tze's were still a source of pride and inspiration.

Fascinated by its mellow glory, T'ai Tsu seriously thought of transferring the capital back to Lo yang. But, possibly on the ground of economy, his ministers advised against this plan, and Lo yang was left to its memories, to the quiet happiness of being a centre of intellectual and artistic activity unruffled by the big winds that blow about all seats of power.

A few months later in the wintry sadness of the ending year T'ai Tsu's life ended also, one of those epoch-making lives from time to time vouchsafed humanity to guide it back into the great Tao of its highest destiny. The seventeen years of his reign transformed China from a congeries of petty quarrelsome states to an Empire almost as great as that of the T'angs after 760, united under a highly cultured Court, a humane administration, a strong, well-disciplined army.

His successor, Chao Huang, the Emperor T'ai Tsung, though a Chün tze by policy rather than by nature, had enough ability and lived long enough to assure the continuity of the great lines he had laid down. This T'ai Tsung was a brother, although T'ai Tsu had three grown-up and distinctly promising sons.

But the old Mother Empress, whom the fall of the Chous had impressed with the idea that a dynasty is lost if it takes the risk of placing a minor on the throne, had on her death-bed exacted a promise that the succession should pass from T'ai Tsu to his two brothers, and then only to his sons.

T'ai Tsu kept his word, T'ai Tsung did not.

In his first defeat at the hands of the Khitans when, bolting from the battlefield in a donkey-cart, he got temporarily separated from his soldiers, these, rallied by his eldest nephew, had openly spoken of making him Emperor. T'ai Tsung heard of it and, his liver, already badly shaken by the jolts of his break-neck donkey-cart ride, flew into a great rage. His nephew at this inauspicious moment asking promotions for some of his officers, was roughly growled at:

"Let them wait till you are Emperor."

The over-sensitive prince went home and committed suicide. The uncle shed copious tears over his dead body.

But as by 984 the other nephew and the brother who stood next in the succession were dead also, the latter even ending



his days in exile, the suspicion arises that the wily crocodile had more to do with those tears than genuine grief.

Possibly, though, the ultimate blame for these over-opportune deaths falls on the shoulders of the Empress, an ambitious intriguer aching to play a rôle in politics, an impossibility with any but her own son on the throne. Otherwise T'ai Tsung proved himself a conscientious ruler, zealously promoting culture and learning. He was himself a great reader and possessed a library of 80,000 books.

By his conquest of the Northern Han territory in 979 he completed the great work of reunification. One unfortunate result of this victory was that it drew the full force of Ching Tsung, the Liao Emperor's wrath down on the Sung. To him a united China was anathema, since it blocked all prospects of ever realizing his ancestor's dreams of a Khitan dynasty on the Dragon Throne. Though too late to save the Northern Han, the very year of their fall he began a war, which with intervals of unstable, insincere peace raged a whole quarter of a century, from 979 to 1004.

In the course of fifteen campaigns victory fluctuated between the two antagonists.

At one time Liao generals would "scoot like mice" and be punished with degradation and severe bastinadoes; at another they would distinguish themselves so much their Emperor would reward them with great banquets and with gifts of horses and of cups of gold.

The most famous general on the Sung side was Yang Yeh, such a sledge-hammer to the Khitan armies the very sight of his flag would stampede them into terrified rout. But they beat him in the end, ambushed and wounded him and took him prisoner. He refused all food and on the third day was released by death.

Of course, as in all protracted wars, deeds of valour, though plentiful, were more than counterbalanced by innumerable deeds of utter abomination. The fate of fortified cities conquered by the Khitans was particularly cruel. With rare exceptions all the men were killed, women and children dragged into slavery, every building looted. Nor did the open country within the war zone, its harvests spoiled or devoured, all trees cut down, the cattle seized, labourers impressed, farmsteads burnt, suffer any less.

Consequently a number of frontier districts, cowed by the lash of the Khitan horsemen, voluntarily submitted to them.

In 983 no less than seventy of such boroughs transferred their allegiance from the Sung to the Liaos.

It was no compensation that in the same year 1,000 clans rebelled against the latter and tried to cross the frontier. Caught on their trek they were driven back, for the vast territories controlled by the Khitans were thinly populated, largely owing to maladministration, and could not tolerate any loss of inhabitants.

Emigration, especially that of sons away from their parents' home, was sternly forbidden. Three years later worse befell.

Towards the close of the preceding century a semi-Tibetan principality, Hsia, had grown up between the Great Wall and the northernmost course of the Huang ho. Its hardy cavalry had rendered T'ang Hsi Tsung such good service against the rebel Salt Merchant Huang Ch'ao that their Khan was given the privilege of using the Imperial clan name Li and created Duke of Hsia. The little Duchy, tucked away in a quiet corner, away from the march of the great military and political events, thrived and grew.

At the incorporation of its eastern neighbour, the Northern Han, into the Sung Empire, it raised no difficulty into accepting the suzerainty of the Sung, and in token thereof the Duke Li Chi ping adopted the name of Ch'ao Pao Chung.

But in 986 his cousin Li Chi Hsien, nursing covetous projects and expecting the Liaos to win in their great struggle with the Sung, left these and with a force of 500 mounted men went over to their enemies.

He was well received, made general of an army corps, given a Yeh-lü princess in marriage and provided with 3,000 horses. Four years later, having conquered two important Chinese cities for his new suzerain, he was created King of Hsia.

Pressing on north-Eastern China, some of its territory overlapping the Great Wall for hundreds of miles, it obliged the Sung to keep large forces along that open frontier, greatly reducing the number they could bring to bear on the Khitans. These in their turn had to fight their old enemies, the Nü-Chên, a Tungusic tribe settled round the lower Amur and Sungari. So the war dragged on.

The Liao Emperor Ching Tsung died over it ; so did the Sung Emperor T'ai Tsung.

But whereas the latter was followed by his well-meaning but unmistakably mediocre son, Chên Tsung, the death of the Khitan ruler placed the government into the capable and terribly energetic hands of his widow, the eldest son, who became the Emperor Shêng Tsung, only being ten years old.

His mother saw to it that he applied himself to study and did not waste too much time on polo and hunting. She also knew



how to win the loyal support of the ablest among the nobles. They welcomed her policy of turning their industrious neighbours Korea and China into milch cows on which Khitan laziness and aggressiveness could feed and fatten. Scornfully she turned deaf ears to all the peace proposals sent by T'ai Tsung, though one was accompanied by the gift of a magnificent belt of rhinoceros horn. That was no use to her.

But after more campaigns, in one of which the new Emperor Chên Tsung led his army himself and beat the Khitans, yet nevertheless sued for peace, suddenly finding his irrepressible enemy within twenty miles of the capital, then she allowed her son to come to terms.

Those offered were certainly too good to refuse. Chên Tsung proposed to call her his Aunt, the polite way of expressing a relationship of humble subordination on his part, and to present her annually with 100,000 ounces of silver and 200,000 rolls of silk. The old lady declared herself satisfied. At last, sure of getting the best Chinese brocade for her robe of longevity, she could curl up and die in peace; which she did on the day of the white hare, the eleventh month of 1009.

Chên Tsung, by then completely lost in transmundane matters, visions, sacrifices, spirit communications and so forth, did not seize this opportunity for discontinuing the yearly gifts of silk and silver to his lamented Aunt. No doubt a wise moderation, for the Khitans had just succeeded in extracting tribute and service both from Koreans and Nü-Chêns and with the Empress-Dowager's strong foreign policy, based on well-equipped, war-inured forces, still in fashion, they were decidedly pleasanter as friends than as enemies.

And friends they remained, until the Nü-Chêns, rising up against them, chased them away into far western wilds and their friendship was no longer worth one copper coin, one yard of silk.

This happened over 100 years later, in 1125.

In 1042 they were still so strong, a mere threat on their part that, unless paid to keep neutral, they might join the Hsias, busy raiding north-western China, was quite sufficient to make the Sung consent to increase the yearly gifts to 200,000 ounces of silver and 300,000 rolls of silk.

Highly refined and intellectualized, the Chinese of the Sung period lacked the robust simplicity which had enabled their ancestors under the Hans to fight barbarians with barbarians under Chinese leadership. Nor did they possess the assurance and enterprise of the T'angs, which cast such a spell over neigh-

bouring tribes it turned them into willing outposts of the Chinese Empire.

Between the subtle minds of the Sungs and the coarse muscle of the nomads no workable understanding could develop, and since no large empire can subsist without ample supplements of auxiliary man-power, that of the Sungs, with no resources but its own, was bound to succumb to the pressure of its northern enemies, the more so as that pressure was considerably greater under the disciplined, well-organized Khitans, and the well-led Nü-Chêns than it had been under the loosely federated Huns.

An exultant wave of pride and energy was sweeping the nomads out of their natural lethargy and welding them into a terrific engine of conquest. A conscious will to power was at work, ranging the chieftains in solid support round an ambitious dynasty and making the rank and file willingly accept the discipline without which power could not be obtained.

The Liaos, therefore, had no difficulty in keeping up a system of conscription according to which every male from fifteen to fifty was liable to military service. Normally this only involved a yearly campaign from the ninth to the twelfth month with a good chance of loot and rewards and was consequently anything but irksome. Every rider was supplied with three horses and two fully accoutred adjuncts for cutting grass and corn and watching the road. Men and horses wore protective armour. Every trooper had to provide his own saddlery, four bows, 400 arrows, long and short pikes, clubs, battle-axes, hammers, tinder-boxes, firestones, a load of fodder, a bag of flour and 200 feet of hempen rope for tying up the horses.

At a general review the army covered a space of a thousand li and never marched into enemy country less than 150,000 strong, mostly in three columns, behind a cavalry screen of 30,000 men. The outpost and scouting work was performed with all the cunning of expert hunters. On long, forced marches soldiers carried their own food, not a difficult task, since they were content with a bowl of hot porridge.

But what made them such a curse to the peasants was that they generally lived on the country they traversed, and on retiring deliberately set everything on fire to impede pursuit and inflict a maximum of damage.

Drums gave the signal for marching, trumpets that for camping. The bastinado from which even officers were not exempt provided some of the discipline, the rest welled up spontaneously from sheer love of hard riding, straight shooting, plundering and contempt of cowardice.



To this compact host of born fighters the Sung had to oppose many good generals, numerous strongly fortified and garrisoned towns, some well-trained regiments, but as regards the bulk of the army, especially the reserves, no cavalry trained from childhood to ride and shoot, only a mass of raw recruits, poor, homesick peasants whom the slightest mischance could turn into a panic-stricken mob.

The attempted remedies were not happily chosen.

Under Ying Tsung, about 1065, compulsory military service was introduced into the districts bordering on the Hsia Kingdom. Each group of five families had to furnish one soldier, always taken from a family having at least three sons. But even this mild form of conscription was unpopular and desertions had to be guarded against by tattooing the recruits on their hands and back, a precaution which was resented as a great indignity.

In 1070 Wang An-shih extended this system in a slightly altered form to the whole of China, but himself prevented its satisfactory functioning by the mass of ill-considered novelties with which he deluged the country, submerging the old landmarks by which men were wont to find their way.

The humiliating conclusion of the long struggle with the Khitans had caused a good deal of fermentation in the public mind, all the more intense because an extraordinary number of keen-witted men were born at that time.

The year 1007 gave birth to the elegant essayist and fearless Censor Ou-yang Hsiu. Ten years later (1017) the profound brooder over ultimate problems, Chou Tun-i, first saw the light of day. The great historian and statesman, Ssü-ma Kuang, was his junior by only two years.

And junior to him by exactly the same length of time the brilliant theorist Wang An-shih, coming into the world he was to trouble so much in 1021.

The youngest of this galaxy of talent, the prince of letters, Su Tung-p'o, was born in 1036.

Those few decades were so prolific in genius, they brought forth a number of distinguished artists and art critics as well. Mi Fei, creator of a new impressionist style of landscape painting, born in 1051, belongs more to the next generation, but Li Lung-mien, famous for his horses and figures, human and divine, drawn in lines of extraordinary strength and precision, was only four years younger than Su Tung-p'o, and the year 1020, that is the year between the birth of the two fierce antagonists, Ssü-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih, saw that of Kuo Hsi, who "for tall pines, swirling streams, beetling crags,

sheer precipices and mountain peaks with their 1,000 and 10,000 shapes strode alone across his generation."

Much of his work was done decorating the palatial residences of the wealthy, "giving free play to his hand on the walls of lofty halls."

Shên Tsung was his admiring patron, about the only piece of wisdom that stands to his credit.

A previous Emperor, Jên Tsung, equally fortunate in his art environment, was brought up on a picture-book painted by that lover of darkness and silence, Kao K'o-ming, at the Empress-Dowager's request. It illustrated the lives and exploits of his ancestors and of the men who distinguished themselves under them. It was not recorded how the artist solved the knotty problem of representing the exploits of the young Emperor's father, Chên Tsung, the sovereign who had bowed his neck under the yoke of Khitan exactions.

He probably avoided this sore subject altogether and dwelt instead on the wonders of Chên Tsung's pilgrimage up the T'ai Shan, wine miraculously welling forth at its foot, a blue Dragon encircling its summit; on the impressive ceremonies of the Imperial visit to K'ung fu Tzū's Temple and Tomb; on the splendours of the monastery of Supreme Purity built at Pien Liang for the Patriarch of the Taoists summoned to the capital and given the title of "Master of the Contemplation conferring life everlasting"; on the miraculous apparitions of ancestral spirits grown one with the deified Huang Ti, apparitions which in the fifth watch of the night drifted into the dreams of the sleeping monarch with unearthly glories of fragrance and amber light. These visions were supplemented by written messages from Heaven, adjuring Chên Tsung to rule well, praising him for his filial piety and assuring him the divine mandate would remain with his family for 700 generations.

All this sounds highly fantastic, but admits of two interdependent explanations. Chên Tsung was evidently endowed with strong psychic faculties. Wonderful perfumes, brilliant lights unaccountably enkindling darkness are frequently seen by those gifted with the power of sight of things termed invisible only because the majority are impervious to their delicate vibrations. Through this contact with the spirit world he obtained the idea of drawing his people's minds away from morbid brooding over concrete matters and lifting it into ecstatic contemplation of super-terrestrial horizons. The dynasty was still young, many had lent it their support in the belief it would bring back the glories of the T'angs when China grew strong and rich with tribute pouring in from all sides.



This hope the Sung had not fulfilled.

Far from wealth streaming in, it was streaming out ; from a tribute receiving the country had fallen to the humiliating level of a tribute paying nation. Failure to pay meant the constant threat of horrible invasions turning into grim reality. There were besides the Hsias and Tibetans, fortunately not so strong as the Khitans, but quite formidable enough to make occasional raids and to exclude all thought of reasserting Chinese supremacy on the great trade-routes to the West.

The thought that such disappointing results were a poor compensation for the loss of provincial independence must have come to many and the danger of its gaining enough strength to overthrow the dynasty was so great, Chên Tsung's ablest ministers, some of them clear-headed Confucianists, deliberately exploited his mysticism to rally all the religious minded (still the overwhelming majority) to the support of the politically gravely discredited throne. The people had to be convinced that in spite of the thousands of ounces of silver and rolls of silk with which they had each year to purchase peace from the barbarians, the Emperor who had signed so onerous a treaty, was the favourite of Heaven, appointed by Heaven to rule over them, making disloyalty no ordinary crime, but a sacrilege doomed to be punished by the anger of the Gods. Something spectacular had to be done to strike public imagination.

The Emperor's visions, coupled with the finding of some spirit-writing, gave the start. Both auspicious occurrences were duly celebrated and advertised by the convocation of a gathering of no less than 24,300 people, officials great and small, monks Buddhist and Taoist, with a sprinkling of distinguished foreigners to render thanks to Heaven and pray for the prolongation of the Emperor's life. The impression made by this ceremony still proving insufficient, the pilgrimage to the T'ai Shan was decided on. That could not possibly fail to rouse universal attention. It had not taken place for close on three centuries, not since 725, during the days of Ming Huang's glory.

When Chên Tsung demurred on the ground of the expense involved, his minister reassured him by saying the outlay would be more than repaid. Which it was.

From that moment the Sung, led by fire, as astrologers had always proclaimed them to be, not the dread fire of war, the pure one of the great Creative force, stood out dazzling in a halo of peculiar sanctity, priests, pilgrims and patrons of all holy places, endowed with the mandate by the direct command of the Jade-pure August Lord of Heaven, the ancient sacerdotal side of their office again strongly emphasized and closely

linked up in the people's mind with its religion. This made their position almost impregnable—from within. Considering how immeasurably the country benefited by the stability of the dynasty, the pious fraud practised by Chên Tsung's ministers to ensure it, appears wholly justified.

But Chên Tsung himself strained his health by plunging too deeply into the occult. Sickness clouded the last two years of his reign. He was compelled to leave the government to others.

Fortunately the energetic little hands of his second wife, the Empress Liu, were ready to take up all the work he had grown too weak to do himself. Orphan daughter of a penniless officer, she had as a child been bought by a jeweller and trained in all the arts of seduction which added to her beauty and intelligence, fitted her to be sold to the Imperial seraglio, when she was fifteen.

Well educated, her wits sharpened by the hardships of her former life, in contrast to her visionary husband, her feet though tiny, solidly planted on the earth of facts and common sense, she counterbalanced his balloonings into the ethereal by her first-hand knowledge of the world of mere men. Majestic in gorgeous official robes embroidered with pheasants, strewn with pearls, a magenta-tinted gauze mask half hiding, half revealing her well-chiselled features, she was admirably fitted for the post of Regent which she occupied for close upon thirteen years.

For when Chên Tsung passed away entirely to his beloved spirits in the early spring of 1022, she placed his sixth son Chao Heng, a lad of thirteen, on the throne—her throne next to his at all councils and audiences. There she sat immovable until her death in 1033, giving the young Emperor Jên Tsung, K'ao K'o-ming's moral picture-book to study, while she herself skilfully guided the state through the complexities of increasingly perturbed times.

The perturbation was an unexpected result of Chên Tsung's strong bias towards religion, which, though it certainly consolidated the dynasty's hold over the country, had the drawback that those who could not or would not follow his pious fervour were driven into the opposite extreme of flattest materialism.

The two view-points idealism, and positivism, which should be blended into one harmonious whole, where they mutually control and correct each other's excesses, were torn violently apart, the idealists losing themselves in clouds of vain hallucinations, the positivists choking in the quicksands of still vainer social experiments.



A middle party, positive in so far as it based its programme on the practical experience of history, which it studied very closely—idealist in that it stressed the ethical side of life, also emerged and was on the whole favoured by the Empress-Dowager.

Its main strength, however, lay, not in government patronage, but in its own remarkable brain-power. All the best thinkers and scholars of the day, Ou-yang Hsiu, Han Ch'i, Ssü-ma Kuang, Su Tung-p'o, Fan Chung-yen, the five famous philosophers, and other noteworthy men belonged to it. Even Wang An-shih entered public life under its auspices, but his irascible dogmatism soon landed him in the camp of those extremists who advocated mechanical remedies for every political evil.

Lü I chien, the first of this group to obtain power, wormed himself into the good graces of Jên Tsung after the Empress-Dowager's death, by promises of ridding him of her old councillors. The matter proved less easy than he had expected. A vicious circle of cabals, quarrels, intrigues was entered, in which ministers, censors, empresses and concubines all lost their tempers or positions or both, and the moderate and the immoderate alternately gained the Emperor's ear.

Ou-yang Hsiu, heart and soul of the former party in his quality of Censor, "made it his duty to speak whenever he saw anything likely to injure Imperial prestige."

He therefore memorialized Jên Tsung on the inadvisability of lavishing so many gifts and favours on his favourite concubine the Lady Chang and her family. A demand had been made on the treasury for 8,000 pieces of silk to be specially dyed in the middle of winter compelling "the poor workmen of the Dyeing Department to break ice before they could obtain water. Eight thousand pieces of silk cannot be for the use of one lady. They must be for distribution." . . . "This gives a handle for public censure which the Throne should not incur. Further the Lady Chang's relations have participated too frequently in the Imperial Bounty, her mother first receiving a District, four days later a Department!" And he energetically concludes:

"Extravagance is rife in the palace. This injures your Majesty and damages the State. I speak as in duty bound, trusting Your Majesty will immediately rectify abuses."

But His Majesty was far too much in love with pretty little Lady Chang to appreciate his Censor's admonitions. And she, secure in her Master's favour, grew so impertinent to the Empress, that the latter one day, her patience completely worn out, retaliated with a volley of blows. Unluckily one of them

landed not on the concubine but on no less a person than the Emperor himself, hurrying to his favourite's rescue. The Empress apparently was a muscular lady. There were scratches and red nailmarks on the august neck.

He showed them to the greybeards of his Council. At such a lamentable sight what could they do but acquiesce in the degradation of the perpetratrix of this dreadful thing?

She had favoured the moderates. Her fall involved theirs and the triumphant Lü I-chien obtained a severe decree depriving them of their right of forming associations. Ou-yang Hsiu, with his usual eloquence, protested against such tyranny, pointing out that associations of righteous men "whose landmarks are duty and loyalty and whose good name is their most treasured possession" had from the time of Shun onward proved of the utmost value to dynasties. When in 1044 the author of the prohibition died, Jên Tsung, coming under the influence of Han Ch'i, went over to Ou-yang Hsiu's opinions and repealed the obnoxious decree.

Sobered by the struggle with the Hsias, the heavy price paid for Khitan neutrality, by raisings of the southern natives, by droughts, earthquakes, eclipses, epidemics, the premature death of his three sons, Jên Tsung made serious efforts to follow the five rules of conduct Ssü-ma Kuang had drawn up for his guidance which were:

"Guard your patrimony.

Value time.

Check sedition.

Study detail.

Grasp reality."

He remitted taxes, granted amnesties, applied the death penalty very sparingly, founded schools in every town and an Imperial college in Pien Liang with rooms for 200 boarders, surrounded himself with the learned and the wise and on the occasion of a lunar eclipse dismissed hundreds of ladies from the Palace.

Maybe pretty little Dame Chang with the remains of her 8,000 rolls of silk was of the number.

For the new Empress, a granddaughter of Ts'ao Pin, the humane conqueror of the Southern T'angs, combined a taste for ruling with a good deal of aptitude and carried on the regency very ably when soon after the sudden death of her husband, the heir he had appointed, his cousin Chao Shu, was prevented by sickness from assuming control.

Warming to her work, she was loath to relinquish it on his recovery and it needed all Han Ch'i's diplomacy to induce her



to resign. But the new Emperor, Ying Tsung, as he came to be called, seemed to have borne her a grudge for her reluctance to leave him in sole possession and treated her with such disrespect, Ssü-ma Kuang from the lofty judgment-seat of his post of Censor called him to task. He opens his indictment by pointing to the calamitous natural phenomena recently afflicting the country, summer floods which created such a famine "the old and the weak perish on the roadside, women and children can be bought more cheaply than dogs or pigs, in some districts relations devour each other and corpses lie piled up in heaps." Then diseases in every household, funerals in every street; "as a crowning disaster," "diluvial rains in autumn sweep away every blade of grass, every ear of corn, undermine walls, gateways, granaries, public and private buildings in the capital where people have to go about in boats, and many are drowned."

Seeking the reasons for these dire visitations of heavenly wrath, Ssü-ma Kuang enumerates three.

The first is the Emperor's unfilial behaviour towards the Empress-Dowager; the second his lethargy and inaccessibility, leaving unscrupulous officials without proper supervision; the third is his obstinacy and deplorable habit of stultifying the work of the censors intended to act as his eyes and ears by submitting their memorials to the ministers, who naturally repudiate any criticism they may contain against their administrative acts or legislative schemes.

It is greatly to the credit of Ssü-ma Kuang to have had the courage to write and to that of Ying Tsung to have had the greatness of soul to accept this memorial in a spirit of gratitude for wise and loyal advice.

He could and did alter his behaviour towards the Empress-Dowager who lived on till 1079.

But the lethargy of which Ssü-ma Kuang complained seems to have been the result of some incurable physical weakness. He only attained the age of thirty-six. His death was a real calamity, for it brought his son, the Emperor Shên Tsung, into power while still in full flush of the gullibility and rash enthusiasms of youth.

The country, burdened with the tribute to the Khitans, was only recovering very slowly from the floods and famines of the preceding reigns and with the menace from Hsia and Tibetan aggressiveness necessitating considerable military expenditure, the call for funds was unpleasantly urgent. The proper remedy, rigid economy and application to work, was not calculated to appeal to an Emperor of twenty.

Wang An-shih's grandiose schemes which on paper convincingly demonstrated that by loans to peasants and merchants, by monetizing payments in kind and in service and so on, the wealth of governed and governors could easily be doubled, appealed to him far more. Wang An-shih was then slightly under fifty, unkempt, unwashed, but alert, energetic, full of ideas, which, arrayed in his self-complacent rhetoric, scintillated with the light of truth.

He was born in the official class with a natural instinct for picking his way up the steps of official ladders. He used the moderates to reach the top. Once there he showed his gratitude by kicking them into the limbo of enforced retirement. Opposition and contradiction, however reasonable, roused his fury. Was it not the height of impudence to differ from him who must be an all-round expert since he could boast of having read treatises on every conceivable subject, even including needlework !

Such encyclopædic book-knowledge clearly entitled him to be a sharp critic of everyone, bar his own sublime infallible self.

Without a trace of humility or doubt he wrote as he thought and read, at a frothy, wild torrential rate, his brush just flying over the paper. According to the high educational standard then prevalent he painted and wrote poetry as well. But his mind, deeply enmeshed in the material aspect of life, was not able to grow the wings which would have lifted it into the glowing horizons of immortal art.

He has been called a Socialist because he endowed the State with commercial functions usually left to individual enterprise. But since the result and possibly even the aim of this transference was the enrichment of government officials and the exploitation of the people, he should rather be classed as a financier, which he certainly was, in so far as much of his thinking was done in terms of money.

Hitherto most taxes were payable in kind, so many measures of grain, so many days of labour being taken from the peasants, an obvious, concrete transaction they could readily understand and which did not demand anything they did not actually possess. Wang An-shih fancied that by reducing all contributions to an uniform system of cash payments, they could be distributed not more equitably, but more widely, and thus increase the public revenue.

To overcome the difficulty agriculturists always experience in finding ready money, he turned the Government into a vast money-lending agency. In spring, on the security of their



newly-sprouting crops, farmers were encouraged to borrow seeds or money from the State, repayable at harvest time in full, plus interest at 2 per cent. a month, a rate not considered usurious in theory.

The peasants, however, soon found it so.

The taking up of the green sprout loan (as it was called) was easy enough ; to find means for the interest, the tax and the repayment of the capital sum was a terrible problem.

Many, unable to solve it, saw their farms seized by the officials who had advanced loans with such unctuous assurances that the good of the peasantry was their only concern.

Similarly, the measure, which ordered that taxation should be assessed not as heretofore on the entire property but by the acre irrespective of ownership, proved a most vexatious deformation, as reforms inspired by the fatuous pedantry of theorists turned politicians mostly do.

It necessitated an army of surveyors to measure and grade the land annually, and an army of lawyers to settle the disputes it started between the owners of the same field.

Even worse was the army of informers bred like maggots by a mischievous clause attached to the law commuting labour into a money tax, which made it a lucrative business to accuse property owners of having understated their wealth in the declarations demanded by the government. It put a premium on blackmail and corruption.

But perhaps the most demoralizing of all Wang An-shih's innovations was the establishment all over the Empire of government offices combining the functions of a bank, a pawnshop and a market. There tradesmen and house owners could obtain mortgages and credit for the purchase of State-owned commodities on sufficient security. Merchant guilds were invited to co-operate and the Emperor himself invested two million strings of cash in the venture. So far had Wang An-shih's influence brought him from the Sages' conception of the Imperial office. The market side of these exchanges was intended to regulate prices in such a manner as to insure a fair uniform level. A similar experiment had been tried under Han Wu Ti and failed, as did Wang An-shih's, as do all such rationalistic contrivances which ignore the subtle facts of life and the fundamental law that the administration of a great country and the arithmetic of barter and banking stand at such opposite poles of thought, they cannot be carried on efficiently by the same men or the same machinery.

Under Shên Tsung, when the Government even undertook the sale of ice, fruit and sesame, the system of state trading

degenerated into a huge trust crushing the small retailer out of existence and raising the price against the public.

Another of Wang An-shih's schemes aimed at providing the cavalry with mounts. Families were urged to take over the care of one or more government horses, for which in the district round the capital, they received fodder, cloth and money as compensation, elsewhere exemption from taxes. These animals could not be used in pursuit of robbers beyond a distance of 100 li, were inspected once a year by government officials, and if any died or went lame, the families had to replace them by sound ones, a provision which made the measure so unpopular, pressure had to be exercised to rope in a sufficient number of volunteers to make it work at all.

Next he tampered with the currency, suddenly declaring one copper cash to be worth two in order to make up for the dearth of coins produced by his ill-considered repeal of all restrictions on the export of metal.

Finally, imagining that the meagre results achieved by his vaunted novelties, was due not to their inherent defects but to the opposition of the moderates and the old officials clinging to wonted methods and beliefs, he determined to force his interpretation of the classics and the whole conglomerate of his political shibboleths upon the schools from which officials were recruited. A knowledge of his commentaries was made obligatory, K'ung Tzū's Annals were put on the index, poetry and polished prose dropped out of the subjects for the state examinations and the study of an etymological dictionary compiled by his own hasty pen strongly recommended. These changes were decreed in 1075, the year Han Ch'i died in the political exile to which his opposition to the reckless innovator condemned him.

The leadership of the Moderates passed into the hands of Ssü-ma Kuang, also in enforced retirement, but hard at work on his history which, planned on a vast scale as "a General Mirror for the Guidance of Government," covered thirteen centuries from the last seven Chous to the end of the Five Dynasties and ranks next to his homonym Ssü-ma Ch'ien's "Historical Records."

He wrote it in Lo yang, drawing inspiration and information from its walls and monuments mellow with age and the mystery of a thousand memories.

He also enjoyed stimulating intercourse with some of the finest intellects of the day, like Shao Yung, the philosopher of the inner meaning of numbers, leading an ascetic hermit's life in a cottage given him by Ssü-ma Kuang and other friends, and



of which his fine character and ripe wisdom made a "Nest of Peace and Joy." Round its intensely frugal board, for Wang An-shih's regulations had made the price of wine prohibitive, there would often foregather Lo yang's most distinguished citizens, Ch'êng Hsiang and his two famous sons, Ch'êng Hao and Ch'êng I, all ardent expounders of Chou Tun-i's school of thought. Not one of them but viewed the Prime Minister's disruptive measures with growing concern, as indeed was done by most, especially when the new military organization failed to prevent meek acquiescence in some further territorial exactions from the Khitans, and a serious invasion from their fellow robbers, the Western Hsia.

A border fortress had been considerably strengthened against these "Iron Kestrels," as the best Hsia fighters were called. But apparently the work was carried out in typical Wang An-shih style, with more haste than thoroughness. Heavy rains washed big gaps into the ramparts, through which under cover of a stormy night the Kestrels forced their way in. Almost the entire garrison of 200,000 men was slain; the rest dragged away into captivity.

A subsequent Hsia invasion was however repulsed in 1084, the year in which Ssü-ma Kuang completed his great historical work. Just in time, for the death of Shên Tsung a few months later, during the spring of 1085, brought about a complete change of policy. Wang An-shih had to withdraw into political exile, which disagreed with him so much he soon followed his master into the grave.

His rival Ssü-ma Kuang was made Prime Minister and forthwith abrogated the most vexatious of his laws.

But the unrest and the insecurity they had created were not so easily got rid of, still less the swarms of parasitic officials bred by his system. These under the leadership of Wang An-shih's son-in-law Ts'ai Pien and his elder brother Ts'ai Ching coalesced into a solid and sullen opposition, watching every opportunity for a return to power.

But during the eight years of the Empress-Dowager Kao's regency, terminated by her death in 1093, the party of reason and honesty was in complete control, for the Sung, unlike most dynasties, were singularly fortunate in their Empresses.

This widow of Ying Tsung ruled so ably for her little grandson Chê Tsung, she earned the title of a female Yao Shun. Born of a family used to giving wives to Emperors, her portrait shows how easily she carried the sumptuousness of her dragon and pheasant robes, the weight of her towering crown with large wings and tassels of pearls and pearl dragons winding

among flowers and butterflies all wrought in pearls above a procession of saints encircling the forehead and edged by a row of yet larger and more lustrous pearls. Pearls in little clusters are even mysteriously fixed on the face, a strange but pretty fancy.

But the real interest lies in the face itself with the finely arched eyebrows, the slightly aquiline nose, the firm but kind mouth, the dark and thoughtful eyes, revealing that truly aristocratic type which commands obedience without an effort and thanks to a high, unflinchingly followed code of honour, never fails to deserve obedience, never attempts to misuse it.

It was she who had called Ssü-ma Kuang away from his peaceful library in Lo yang to assist her in rescuing the country from the confusion into which Wang An-shih had plunged it.

Unfortunately he died within a year of assuming office, to the very last toiling for the public good. Deeply mourning, she and the young Emperor followed his bier. The whole nation wept with her, realizing they had lost their best friend, perhaps the only one of the calibre needed to restore the needed harmony—only destroyed by Wang An-shih's dogmatism. Even in remote districts many enshrined his portrait and added him to the number of their household gods. Had not the people of Lo yang long ago called him the Living Buddha of the 1,000 families? One of the men he had recommended to the Throne as "a lover of the Ancients, sincere, simple and no place seeker, ordering life according to the highest principles" was no other than the Lo yang philosopher, Ch'êng I.

The Dowager gave him the important post of Tutor to the boy Emperor. Ch'êng I's father was too old for office, but was accorded a state funeral when he died in 1090, not before having had the comfort of seeing Wang An-shih's commentaries turned out again of the place they had usurped in the school curriculum.

Nevertheless, all was not well with the party.

The President of the Board of Rites, the brilliant writer Su Tung-p'o, suffering from an excess of author's vanity, grew jealous of Ch'êng I and began to work against him, with the result that the party split into a western group led by Su Tung-p'o, a centre one round Ch'êng I, and a northern one with shifting leadership.

But the crowning misfortune was that the young Emperor, in spite of Ch'êng I's teaching, proved a self-willed, irascible, injudicious ruler the moment his grandmother's death placed the responsibility of government on his shoulders. They bent under the burden, possibly owing to some physical weakness.

His portrait shows a nervous, bilious, ill-tempered face, old-



looking too, though he only lived to twenty-four. The high standard of conduct practised but perhaps too frequently preached by Ssü-ma Kuang's followers, wearied the inexperienced youth. Wang An-shih's school, flouting the idea of heavenly supervision over human behaviour and believing in the acquisition of money rather than in that of merit, appealed to him much more.

It was a relief to turn from the blunt admonitions of Ch'êng I to the honeyed flatteries deftly served by Wang An-shih's son-in-law Ts'ai Pien and his brother Ts'ai Ching. The wise Regent had not been dead a year before her policy was not merely abandoned but denounced and persecuted. Ch'êng I was dismissed to Szechuan, Su Tung-p'o exiled to the malarial wilds of Hai-nan ; Ts'ai Ching installed as Prime Minister, and almost the whole of Wang An-shih's system reinstated, with its retinue of sharks, who during nine years had hungered for the fishponds in which it was so easy to grow fat.

Their mouths were large, their teeth were long.

They soon succeeded in organizing a bitterly vindictive persecution against the men whose integrity stood out as a constant reproach to their own baseness, which was of so despicable a character it did not even refrain from that foulest of sacrileges, the reviling of the dead. Their chief victim was the great Ssü-ma Kuang. Officially they cursed and posthumously degraded him, first in 1094 ; again in 1102, once more in 1103, the earlier anathemas evidently having failed to convince the people that this unselfish toiler for their good was a creature to be abhorred. Also in 1103 Ts'ai Ching spewed forth an angry edict ordering all his portraits to be torn down. As late as 1123, the fires of unjust hatred still burning, the blocks from which his books were printed, had to be destroyed, and any governor proposing one of his followers for office was to be considered guilty of high treason. The sons of the proscribed group had already since 1103 been debarred from all posts in and around the capital.

But Ts'ai Ching's crowning achievement in his propaganda of calumny was the erection of a stone tablet, on which he had the names of Ssü-ma Kuang and over 300 members of his party engraved and held up to public obloquy as those of diabolical traitors. For three years the absurd memorial stood in front of the Palace flaunting its lie in the face of Heaven. Then a comet swept into sight and made the Emperor tremble with the fear of eternal wrath.

He fasted and did penance and gave orders to have the lie removed. In the darkness of night it was knocked to pieces.

What was more useful still the Ts'ai brothers dropped out of favour for several years and many of Wang An-shih's laws were again abrogated.

But the moderates lacked a great leader. Su Tung-p'o and Ch'êng I were both dead. There was none to take their place. Minds of such quality are not given every generation.

The lack of genuine statesmen is altogether very noticeable at that period, a lack that so often precedes and unavoidably precipitates the great catastrophes which from time to time slash giant rifts into a people's happiness. The persecution to which the moderates had been subjected, the corruption rampant in the government had disgusted the best men with politics and driven them to concentrate their energies on art and literature, with the result that the pursuit of art was carried on as eagerly and successfully as the conduct of state affairs was neglected and mismanaged.

Artists were great, politicians futile.

Among the former the most famous were Chao Ta-nien, a kinsman of Hui Tsung's, whose exquisite landscapes have still the power to evoke dreams of peace and beauty, and Mi Fei, the brilliant calligraphist, art critic and collector. He possessed the greatness of originality and all its boldness, for he carried Wang An-shih's spirit of innovation straight into painting, dissolving the clear outlines inherited from the T'ang landscapists in a blur of thick black dabs which his genius was strong enough to preserve from degenerating into meaningless confusion.

It was this fearless originality which won him Hui Tsung's favour, the Emperor who at the very beginning of his reign ordered the painters of the Imperial Academy henceforth to paint direct from life without reference to traditional styles.

Not that he scorned the old masters. On the contrary, like Mi Fei, he was an ardent collector of all ancient art and got together a wonderful museum, the catalogue of which, with full-size wood-block prints of the bronze specimens, has fortunately survived. Collections, especially of pictures, were altogether so much the fashion, even the Liao Emperor possessed one, and embassies from Korea and Japan were eager buyers of Chinese paintings and writings.

Hui Tsung was a great painter himself, with a nervous, vibrant brush-stroke evoking brilliant-eyed hawks, delicate flowers, swaying pine-branches as readily as the marvels of the world of spirits and star-gods, and the tragic grandeur of rock-bound mountain solitudes. Indeed, art, and the religiousness and the visions which beget art, were his constant, perhaps his only absorbing interest.



When he first succeeded his brother Chi Tsung, who died childless, he showed some leanings towards the moderates.

Ch'êng I and Su Tung-p'o were both recalled from their exile ; but the latter died a short year later, and Ch'êng I soon realized he was powerless at a Court virtually ruled by the Ts'ais. He retired and died in 1107, just as the long broom of a comet had swept the innovators out of office.

But by dint of incessant intrigue they came back in 1112, this time in strange alliance with Taoist priests. For Ts'ai Ching, with the sharpness which rogues so often possess in much more serviceable quantities than the righteous, had detected the controlling spring of Hui Tsung's actions, religion, in one of its most interesting forms, Taoist mysticism.

Its contempt for the world of everyday fact and effort, its trust in the intuitive in preference to the rational, its doctrine of the blessedness of Wu Wei, non-doing, non-interference in the regular evolution of things, its restful dependence on the immense calm of the innermost, ultimate way harmonized exactly with Hui Tsung's natural bent.

He was not born with any taste for the dry details of government. It was an unutterable weariness to constantly attend to them as his Confucian advisers admonished him to do.

Then to discover the opposite was the road to salvation, that all the boring mass of practical affairs could, even *should* be left to settle itself, what a wonderful relief ! How much time it saved for the study and enjoyment of beauty, for the painting of wonderful pictures, for the dreaming of yet more wonderful dreams.

Beatific visions, the eerie palaces of immortals resting on glittering morning clouds were vouchsafed to him. Taoist adepts, whom Ts'ai Ching introduced to him, opened up all the lure of the occult, giving him the illusion of possessing sources of knowledge inaccessible to ordinary men. Under their influence the fervour of his faith grew prodigious. His psychic ancestor Chên Tsung seemed to have come to life again.

But Hui Tsung claimed to be the incarnation of a far loftier spirit, no less a one than the eldest son of the Jade Pure August Lord of Heaven Himself, the great Sovereign of the Eternal Way, whose place in the Empyrean was meanwhile filled by his younger brother. In this belief he gave himself the title of the Sublime Ruler, Master of the Doctrine, Prince of the Way, and had a special temple built, in which he could commune with his divine younger brother, Viceroy over the Spirit world. He also built a new Hall of Understanding (Ming Tang), had the great Yü's nine symbolical urns cast, encouraged the making of Taoist

statues and the endowment of Taoist monasteries, and ordered Taoist legends and traditions to be collected throughout the Empire and written down.

These compilations as well as the canonical books of Taoism were given a place of honour in the Imperial library, and two learned Taoists specially appointed as librarians to expound their holy scriptures to seekers of the right way.

These multiplied at a rate which would have been miraculous if demonstrative professions of faith in Taoism had not become a sure gate to promotion and government favour. On Taoist festivals any beggar posing as a Taoist monk in blue robe and black hat received a meal and 300 cash from the district magistrate. Soon the Taoist religious organization felt strong enough to tackle the problem which had troubled it so long, how to annihilate its great rival Buddhism.

It so happened that Hui Tsung's favourite spiritual adviser, Lin Ling su, had begun his monastic career as a novice in a Buddhist temple and as such had once been thrashed so severely he ran away and joined a Taoist brotherhood instead. Another time, begging at the gate of a Buddhist monastery, he had been roughly turned away, since when he vowed Buddhism a debt of hatred which, after he had been honoured with the titles of Interpreter of the Truth and Teacher of Fundamental Mysteries, he thought he could at last pay off with compound interest.

In 1119 he obtained a decree transferring all Buddhist church property to the Taoists. Buddhist monks and nuns were given the alternative of retiring to their families or of entering Taoist monasteries.

Buddha himself and his whole retinue of saints were annexed by the Taoist Pantheon, a corollary to the complete intellectual assimilation of Buddhist philosophy by Chinese thinkers characteristic of the period.

But the image of the great Indian prophet with all his attributes had been drawn far too clearly by generations of sculptors and painters to allow him to become a mere satellite of the palpably new Taoist divinities however jade-like their purity might be.

Besides, the Teacher of Fundamental Mysteries shortly afterwards fell out of favour. One day, Pien Liang being threatened by a flood, he and his retinue of monks went up the city wall processionally to order the rising waters to fall.

It was his reputation which fell instead. Some workmen, possibly Buddhists, hustled him down and off with threatening cudgels. He next offended the Crown Prince by claiming precedence over his carriage on the road. The Prince complained,



and his father, lacking the energy to stand up for his favourite, yielded to pressure from within and outside the Palace, changed his sonorous titles into the humiliating one of Great Chamberlain of Supreme Vanity and cast him forth. Most of his advice was cast out too, and Buddhism restored into all its former rights.

After which little excitement Hui Tsung settled down again to his prayers, his painting, his collections, his Academy of painters for another five years of pure happiness, in the magnificent Palace of Unending Bliss which Ts'ai Ching had built for him with all the exquisiteness, the perfect taste of that age of artists. But a mistake had been made in the name. The bliss was not unending.

With frightful suddenness it turned into blackest misery.

For while Hui Tsung was communing with the world of spirits, staggering changes were taking place in the world of men.

In a struggle lasting a full ten years (from 1114 to 1125) Khitan power was pulverized and over its ruins arose a new star of incalculable magnitude, that of the wild Nü-Chêns.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE NÜ-CHÊNS

**T**HEY, the Nü-Chêns, were one of the many Tungusic tribes whom the Iron Dynasty had drawn into the net of its tribute- and service-exacting suzerainty, though only after protracted and fierce fighting.

Consequently the Nü-Chên chieftain who was to lead his people into victory and fame had a large fund of brooding hatred, of bitter memories to draw on for rousing them to that pitch of fighting frenzy which in those days of individual prowess was practically invincible.

Feeding their flocks and hunting along the banks of the Sungari, the Nü-Chêns were in a transitional stage between tent and village life, and divided into a semi-civilized group on the Upper and a wholly savage one on the Lower Sungari. The latter found in the two brothers Akuta and Wu Chi-mai of the Wan-yen clan the leaders, who, harnessing their untamed vigour to the mechanism of a state built on the Chinese model which they had observed among the Liaos, made a formidable weapon out of their rough horsemen. These could ride from dawn to sunset without a drink, a halt or a bite of food, and threw their spears with deadlier accuracy than anyone else. The Khitans, on the other hand, had grown slack and swollen-headed during the long fat years of undisputed dominion. The 200,000 ounces of silver, the 300,000 rolls of silk flowing into their hands without an effort had done their insidious work.

The Iron Dynasty was corroded through and through with the rust of laziness.

T'ien Tsu, its tenth Emperor, far preferred hunting to drilling troops. He also lacked the force of character or the personal magnetism that would have assured him the loyal service of his nobles on which his power ultimately really rested.

He mounted the throne in 1101. The very next year one noble revolted, and on being defeated fled to the wild Nü-Chêns. These, not yet ready to rise, slew him and sent his head to their overlord.



But the idea of revolt had been started. Ten years later it had grown into a motive of action.

When, according to custom, the Nü-Chên chieftains came to render homage to the Liao Emperor fishing in north-eastern rivers, he bade them dance before him. They all did except one, Akuta. He would not dance at a Khitan's bidding, and met reiterated requests with the excuse of want of skill. The Emperor, whom frontier officials had already warned of suspicious military activity, like the building of fortified camps among the wild Nü-Chêns, for a moment thought of getting Akuta murdered, but failed to follow up the idea, with the result that the very next year, while he was, as usual, away in the hills hunting, Akuta with 300 horsemen suddenly swept into a border town, spied out the land and dashed off again, to reappear a twelvemonth later with an immense force of various tribes he had gathered round the inspiring banner of revolt against Khitan oppression.

He defeated every general sent against him.

Angry demands of submission he answered with scornful ones, asking that T'ien Tsu should submit to him. Such unheard-of impudence roused T'ien Tsu to go and fight this abominable savage himself.

With a vast host he started north, sending another army south to crush the enemy in a wide enveloping movement. But part of this latter force broke away under the leadership of an Imperial clansman who plotted to put another Yeh-lü on the throne. He did not succeed and his heart, torn out of his body, was exhibited to the ancestral tablet.

This was T'ien Tsu's last notable triumph.

Against Akuta he failed miserably.

Attacking him in the last month of 1115 he lost battle, carts, tents and luggage.

Revolts and defections now spread like wildfire. Cities, districts, entire tribes went over to Akuta ; regiments mutinied, soldiers turned into robbers. Some of their gangs attained the strength of 10,000 men and terrorized the peasants, many of whom they dragged away, to eat them, for the usual companion of war, famine, was raging too, and cannibalism ceased to be an unthinkable abomination.

Among the Nü-Chêns it was still practised as a rite pleasing to their divinities.

Twenty years later, in his captivity, the Sung Emperor Chin Tsung witnessed a gruesome ceremony on the occasion of some spring festival. A man and a woman were decapitated, their bleeding corpses packed on to two oxen, the heads stuck on the

animals' horns and a huge procession formed with drums beating and waving banners to escort the victims to the temple, where they were placed on a large table and cut up. The oxen were stabbed and the blood streaming from their wounds collected in a large bowl and placed near the human flesh. Two wizards barefooted but in embroidered clothes and pheasant-plumed hats, carrying flags and brass clappers, burnt incense and candles and waved to the crowd to kneel down, for the God was approaching, the God was speaking words they repeated but which no one could understand.

Then with a loud noise three boys in purple trousers climbed down the pillars from the roof beams, danced about, drank the blood, ate the flesh and disappeared the same way they had come.

Among the worshippers there were hunters, traders, farmers, officials.

Similarly on the seventh day of the seventh month some wretched youth was caught, and his head offered to the God, boiled and eaten.

Men with such customs were to rule the country of K'ung Tzŭ and Lao Tzŭ, of Po Chŭ-i and Su Tung-p'o. It meant a far deeper descent into barbarism than a continuance of Khitan supremacy would have involved.

For the Khitans, though not to the extent as their remote predecessors the Wei Tobas, had assimilated enough Chinese culture to attain quite a creditable level of civilization. T'ien Tsu found pleasure in his collection of Chinese paintings; one of his cousins, the Yeh-lŭ Ta-shih, who was to bring a last sunset glory to the dynasty, took his scholar's degree in the Han lin College at Pien Liang, and a son of T'ien Tsu's, one year King in the break-up of his father's empire, was of so merciful a disposition, he gave all he had away to the destitute and would never inflict the death penalty.

But victory, as so often happens, remained with the savage-hearted and heavily armed.

Already in the second year of war Akuta felt strong enough to style himself Emperor of the Ta Chin, the Great Golden Dynasty, which drew into its orbit all that the Iron Dynasty was losing. The Hsias and the Mongols attempted to assist the latter, but were beaten, though not so severely as to prevent their offering the now fugitive T'ien Tsu an asylum.

The Sung, on the contrary, sided with the Nŭ-Chêns, which in view of all they had suffered from the Khitans was a very natural thing to do, and would have proved a wise one if their military strength had been at all on a level with the extent of their frontiers and of their pretensions.



Unfortunately, under the inefficient Ts'ai Ching, the vital question of preparedness had been scandalously neglected and army matters left to one of his creatures, the eunuch T'ung Kuan. He was in charge of the expedition which according to the treaty of alliance made with the Golden Chins in 1120, the Sung sent against the Liaos. Its objective was Yen Ching, which together with the sixteen districts annexed by the Khitans, was to revert to China as an equivalent for the tribute of silk and silver till then paid to the Khitans and henceforth payable to the Nü-Chêns.

But the Liaos, helpless before Akuta, easily routed the Chinese.

This exhibition of weakness had the most disastrous consequences, for it made it so plain to the Golden Dynasty that the wealth of China was kept behind unlocked doors, it became merely a question of time when it would send its spearmen south to seize it.

The immediate effect was that Yen Ching having been captured by the Nü-Chêns, instead of by the Chinese, Akuta increased their annual tribute by one million strings of copper cash, and refused to give them more than six out of the sixteen districts promised.

Even these he only handed over after having stripped them absolutely bare. The best part of the population itself was forcibly evicted and knew not whither to turn.

With an army beaten by the defeated, what could the Sung do but humbly acquiesce? However, the evicted inhabitants of Yen Ching and the surrounding districts, wandering north, rallied round Chang Ku, the governor of the strong border fortress Ping chêng, whose well-drilled forces were the only ones who "had not laid aside their armour" before the triumphant progress of the Nü-Chêns.

He was still so loyal to T'ien Tsu he regularly communicated all important decisions to his portrait.

The fugitives now persuaded him to go over to the Sung, which he did, and if these had given him proper support a powerful focus of resistance against further barbarian encroachments might have been created. Instead, when after a few early successes, Chang Ku had to flee for his life into Sung territory, they only made a feeble effort to protect him.

The rattle of the spears of one Nü-Chên army was enough to frighten them into abject betrayal of their unhappy guest. Grovelling before the Golden Conquerors, they sent them his head in a box with Hui Tsung's compliments and apologies.

This diplomatic defeat was even more serious than the earlier

military one, for it convinced the many chieftains, governors, tribes and townships torn adrift from their former vassalage to the Liaos, yet by no means desirous of accepting Nü-Chên dominion, that to seek safety from this unpleasant eventuality in a Chinese protectorate was like taking shelter in a rain-storm under a thatch of broken reeds.

The death of Akuta in the second half of 1123 made no difference to the relative strength of the antagonists, for his brother Wu Ch'i-mai, who succeeded him, was just as relentless a conqueror.

Realizing that the subjugation of the North had to be completed before that of the South could be attempted, Wu Ch'i-mai at once ordered the pursuit of T'ien Tsu to be pressed home with increased vigour.

Soon the great hunter was hunted game, fleeing along steep mountain spurs from before Nü-Chên spears. Overtaken at dusk by a blizzard, one of his followers lent him his sable cap, gave him porridge and wild berries to eat and made a pillow for him on his knees, while his few other retainers quenched their thirst with ice and snow. At last they reached a farmstead whose owner recognizing his Emperor wept and sheltered him several days.

But the Nü-Chêns were everywhere.

In the second month of 1125 they had run their quarry down, in the eighth they reached the Golden Court with their prisoner. In the ninth month he fell ill and died, and over the rivers, plains and mountain ranges from the Yalü to the pasture grounds of the Mongols, from the Gulf of Pechili to the edge of the desert, the Chins now ruled far more absolutely than the last Liaos, for their blood was young and their spear-throwing unrivalled.

Only a remnant of the Khitans under the leadership of Yeh-lü Ta-shih, the Han lin graduate, trekked West, ever further West, past Hsia and Uighur territory, allied itself to some tribes in the Tarim Basin, conquered others round Lake Balkash and set up the Kingdom of the Western Liaos, also called that of the Kara or Black Khitai, their residence sometimes in the rich city of Samarkand. Under five sovereigns, of whom two were women, Yeh-lü Ta-shih's widow and his daughter, it lasted to the beginning of the next century and must have brought a reflected glow of Chinese culture and a revival of Buddhism into those forcibly Mahommedanized regions.

The exodus of the last Khitan man-power left Wu Ch'i-mai free to concentrate his forces on what had probably from the first been his most cherished dream, the subjugation of the silk-



weaving, money-producing, jade-chiselling Chinese. For these uncouth savages had not been slow in acquiring a taste for the rich assortment of luxuries made by their civilized neighbours.

A Chinese ambassador, Hsü Kang tsung, sent north in the hope of establishing friendly relations, describes Wu Ch'i-mai's palace on the Sungari as hung with superb Chinese brocades, on which rocks and mountains, pines and cypresses, dragons and elephants, birds and flowers, Buddhas and immortals were figured.

Wu Ch'i-mai himself was arrayed in embroidered silk, a jade clasp belt, white leather boots, and a black head-dress with long streamers like those of a Buddhist abbot. His throne was covered with tiger skins, before him stood some red lacquer tables decorated with gold and silver, and food was served to him in vessels of ivory, gold, jade and horn.

But the music was frightful, the drinking heavy, the town a mere camp without streets or ramparts, the Emperor's hall alone, standing within a walled enclosure.

The Chinese ambassador was treated with the greatest hospitality, and escorted back to the frontier with utmost civility. Nevertheless, he felt sure that war on his master had already been fully decided on. Which was only too true.

In the tenth month of 1125, Wu Ch'i-mai unleashed his hounds. Forward they dashed over the three feet high embankment thrown up to mark the boundary, across the belt of uncultivated land on its other side, on to the villages and cities of China, unprepared and unprotected, bound to surrender.

The plains of Chihli, the valley of the Fen, became the happy hunting-ground of the barbarians. News of such blackness could not be concealed from Hui Tsung, hitherto purposely kept ill-informed by Ts'ai Ching and his clique.

The startled dreamer, in the mistaken belief that Wu Ch'i-mai's enmity was directed against him personally for not having surrendered Chang Ku quickly enough, imagined a change of government might placate his anger. He therefore stepped down from the throne, which had never meant very much to him, and placed his eldest son there.

This prince, known as Ch'in Tsung, Emperor for twelve troubled months, prisoner for twenty-nine unendurable years, closes the northern Sung Dynasty with his infinitely pathetic figure.

He was twenty-six, with a kind but sad look on his face, which is true also of his wife, the Empress Jen Wei, who sat for her portrait in simpler robes than preceding Empresses—a slender girl, her mouth and eyes full of sorrow as if they knew

that the great crown of gold and pearls on the small head would turn into a crown of thorns.

Indeed, there were strange portents announcing disaster and doom.

An uncanny apparition, sometimes a man, sometimes a blind black dog, haunted Lo yang, devoured small children and spread a lurid vapour dropping blood.

In the capital a fox had penetrated into the palace and curled up on the throne. Friendly familiar faces had disappeared: Chao Ta-nien was dead, Mi Fei and Li Lung-mien had passed away.

Ts'ai Ching had gone blind, and though still in office, left everything to his son Ts'ai Tao, as great a rogue as he. Through his influence creatures like Chang Pang-ch'ang, Ch'in Kuei, Chu Mien, who hid greed, cowardice and treachery under obsequious smiles, held highly responsible posts. Watching the approaching storm they were already secretly trimming their sails to meet it without loss to themselves or their possessions.

Chu Mien was an unscrupulous climber of low birth of whom Ts'ai Ching made use to supply Hui Tsung's collections with new and rare specimens, so that the Emperor, happily employed in sorting and admiring them, should find no time for state affairs.

Most of these treasures, pictures, manuscripts, jades, bronzes, Chu Mien shamelessly extorted from their legitimate owners and sent them in large quantities to the capital. They did not all find their way into the Palace of Unending Bliss.

Some he disposed of for his own benefit. In a few years this apothecary's son swelled out into such a plutocrat he could afford palaces, retainers, an armed bodyguard and fleet of his own. Chin Tsung, no doubt rightly, considered such ostentation a sure sign of incipient disloyalty and ordered the arrogant profiteer to commit suicide.

But the other traitors working more subtly were not so easily disposed of. Ministers were split into a war party led by capable men like Li Kang and Han Shih Chung, and a peace party composed of all the corrupt elements who had wormed themselves into wealth and power under the Ts'ais.

It was difficult for the young Emperor to break at once with his father's advisers without appearing unfilial. When he finally did banish Ts'ai Ching to a remote provincial post, on the way to which that old malefactor died, it was already too late.

Li Kang indeed had put up such a splendid defence of Pien Liang that the Nü-Chên forces, up till then constantly victorious,



failed after a thirty-three days' siege to make any impression on the walls.

But the minds of the citizens were completely battered in.

Hui Tsung, the over-sensitive artist, had shown the way of fear by hurrying South as far as Nanking ; many prominent families had followed suit.

When the Nü-Chêns began to make peace overtures they were eagerly taken up, though the conditions offered could not be kept without ruining the country. Five million ounces of gold, fifty of silver, and one million rolls of silk plus some cession of territory and the bestowal on Wu Ch'i-mai of the title of "Uncle" to the Sungs, was the price demanded for the invaders' withdrawal from Chinese soil.

Chin Tsung, probably feeling himself powerless till he had put better men into office, humbly agreed.

The treaty was signed, the Nü Chêns started north again and got sufficiently far for Hui Tsung to return to his beloved Taoist Hall in Pien Liang, where he continued to devote his time "to the purifying and nourishing of his soul." Which was as well, for the hour was close at hand when fate was to leave him nothing but his spiritual fortitude with which to bear the burden of his afflictions.

His son meanwhile grappled resolutely with the practical difficulties of the situation and flung Wang An-shih's faction and principles overboard. These tearing great rifts into the foundations of the state with ill-considered novelties had undoubtedly proved one of the most potent causes of the present catastrophe. If Ch'in Tsung had had at his disposal a large well-disciplined army like the one his ancestor inherited from the Latter Chou, the intruding barbarian flood might have been broken into harmless spray. But the prerequisites of such an army, patriotic ministers, a contented people, equitable taxation, honest finances, had been destroyed by Wang An-shih's disciples and their fanatical persecution of the party of moderation and probity.

Ch'in Tsung called the latter back to power as soon as he could, unfortunately not as soon as was necessary. Had it been done three years earlier, before the collapse of the Khitans, defence could have been adequately organized. As it was, their own dynasty driven West, the Sung army discredited, the prospect of looting the rich cities of the South became a most effective bond of union between the Khitans and their new masters, rendering Nü-Chên control over the former Liao military strength absolute, because acquiesced in willingly.

It enabled the Golden Emperor to divert the robber bands

infesting his new conquests into his neighbour's territory, absorbing them in the army organization which once had enabled the Khitans to overpower his ancestors. These forces, knit together by an immense desire for dominion and wealth, could exercise such relentless pressure, the party which worked for peace at any price on the ground that resistance to overwhelming masses was utterly hopeless, had some show of reason on its side. Indeed, it must be admitted that above either the merits or misdeeds of parties and individuals, an irresistible fate, an elemental growth seem to have been at work, thrusting up from far northern marshes, woods and undulating immensities of prairie grass, three successive waves of human energy, each one engulfing its predecessor, gathering volume and momentum and therefore gaining ever more ground.

The Khitans overflowing the Great Wall were the first, the Nü-Chêns overflowing the Yellow River the second, the Mongols overflowing the whole of China, almost of Asia, the third of these gigantic tidal waves.

What could the Chinese, deprived of their best recruiting ground, the old home provinces, achieve against such volcanic spilling of fighting frenzy into their peaceful rice-fields and quiet mulberry orchards?

The wonder is not that they finally succumbed, but that they held out so long.

In the first of their black years of humiliation, they soon discovered they had promised more than they could pay. No doubt the savages, as crafty as modern diplomatists, had fixed the tribute at an impossibly high figure in order never to lack an excuse for renewing their attacks on what they knew was a fairly helpless victim.

Some Chinese regiments, possibly provoked beyond endurance by the victor's insolence, attacked the homeward moving Nü-Chêns, but were beaten, scattering the panic of their defeat far and wide.

The Nü-Chêns, on the other hand, were overjoyed.

Pien Liang should not escape them after all. Once more their armies closed around it, this time too swiftly to allow escape. Forty days they besieged it.

Probably in secret collusion with them, Chang Pang-ch'ang's and Ch'in Kuei's peace party persuaded the Emperor he might be able to obtain better terms if he went to the Nü-Chên's camp in person. First warning his half-brother, Prince K'ang, who at the time was trying to raise troops in Nanking, to remain there, Ch'in Tsung started negotiations with Wu Ch'i-mai's general.

But the Nü-Chêns were not in a parleying mood. What



they wanted was unlimited opportunity for loot and the annihilation of the Sung in order to leave China leaderless, an easy prey to break up and bleed.

They made Ch'in Tsung a prisoner, decoyed Hui Tsung out of the peace of his Taoist sanctuary, gave up the capital to ruthless pillage, set up Chang Pang-ch'ang as the vassal king of the Great Chin and "on the first day of the fourth moon, 1127, made the two Emperors with all their wives and children, ministers and attendants, in all 3,000 persons" start for the Court of their conqueror under a strong escort.

The evening before their departure the whole Imperial family knelt down gazing in the direction of their ancestral temple, bidding a long farewell to the spirits of their forefathers whose heritage they had been unable to protect. Hui Tsung was so overcome, he almost fainted, and seems altogether to have been taken utterly by surprise at the terrible turn events were taking.

He wrote a pitiful appeal to Wu Ch'i-mai, imploring him to vent all his wrath on him alone as the only guilty one, neither generals, nor ministers being to blame, and generously to grant his son a small strip of land in the far South for keeping up the family worship. Such humility from the legitimate Son of Heaven must have delighted the Chin Emperor, and when, after a long and exhausting journey, his Imperial captives arrived in Yen Ching, where he was holding Court, he treated them fairly well.

He created Hui Tsung Duke, Ch'in Tsung Earl of Heavenly Waters, promised them good houses to live in, and allowed them the luxury of a bath.

But they had to prostrate themselves before him to the point of utter exhaustion. Very soon, too, he lost interest in their fate, and ordered them to be taken further north and left them to the tender mercies of subordinates.

These, as is the way of underbred victors, made the most of their opportunity of kicking helpless beings who could not retaliate. On the march they would tie their prisoners together by their sleeves and not unloose them even at night. When carts broke down owing to the bad state of the roads, their occupants were compelled to walk, and if unable to keep up were simply cut down by the mounted escort.

Once the captain of this choice collection stopped at the house of a magistrate, who regaled him inside with a huge banquet while the two Emperors were tied like cattle to the pillars of the courtyard, hungry, ragged, footsore.

Another time, under pretence of an attempt at escape, Ch'in

Tsung was thrashed so mercilessly he lost consciousness twice.

His poor little wife died on the hard floor of a wretched room furnished only with stones, sworn at by the guard for having fallen ill and refused even a cup of water.

Her body, wrapped in coarse matting, was bundled out and buried anyhow. His mother, the Empress, whom he carried on his back over the cruel trek, lay down one evening on the edge of a forest and passed away, happier than those who survived to be dragged through swamps and deserts in fog and storm with scarcely a plank to sleep on, putrid water to drink, dry bread to eat and not enough even of that.

Hui Tsung's last prison was in Chun Chou, about seventy miles further north than Wu Kuo Cheng, on the Sungari, right in the heart of the original home of his savage jailers and far beyond even any dream of escape or rescue.

There, through the fly-infested heat of summer and the bitter cold of winter, he lay like a statue, totally blind, half deaf and paralysed, on a bed of beaten clay. From there in the spring of 1135, death at last released him.

Ch'in Tsung's release only came twenty years later, twenty long, long years, during which he was shifted from place to place, sometimes imprisoned for months in a tiny room of a yamen, short of food and clothes, always watched by unfriendly eyes, white-haired at thirty-six; sometimes kept in temples, where he was comparatively happy, the monasteries evidently remaining islands of light and compassion amidst the black flood of savage inhumanity.

Often with the desperate optimism of the profoundly unhappy, he would interpret trivial occurrences, ordinary dreams as sure omens of a brighter future. A dream that the Goddess of Mercy told him his brother Prince K'ang had crossed the Yangtze on the famous red horse of Kuan Yü, and that the Sungs would reign another century and a half cheered him for weeks.

It was about the only comfort he got, apart from the devotion of A Chi Ti, frequently in charge of his guard.

A Chi Ti was Chinese born and had been the attendant of one of the Sung governors, who thinking discretion the better part of valour, voluntarily surrendered to the Nü-Chêns. At a banquet he gave their general, no less a commander than Kan-li-pu, the future conqueror of Pien Liang, the latter took a fancy to A Chi Ti and by a mere change of clothes and name thought he had turned him into a perfect Tunguse, which in a way was true.





EMPRESS HUI TSUNG. NORTHERN SUNG





A Chi Ti served his new master loyally, but his Chinese heart felt pity for his old ones, and he did all he safely could to mitigate their hardships.

His record of their captivity makes strangely moving reading.

Another former subject, whom Ch'in Tsung met in the course of his enforced wanderings, had bought his office from the Nü-Chêns by dint of much money. While resting at his yamen, the captive Emperor heard a song of Pien Liang sung by a sweet, soft Chinese voice. A Nü-Chên chieftain had captured the daughter of a Sung noble and given her to this renegade magistrate.

She was one of the lucky ones. The fate of most of these delicately nurtured Chinese women torn from their beautiful homes was appalling. Many, among them a granddaughter of a Prince, were sold to a foul Nü-Chên hag who exploited them as singing girls and beat them hard if they failed to bring her enough money.

Hui Tsung's principal concubine herself, the mother of Prince K'ang, was taken to wife by a Nü-Chên chieftain, probably not altogether unwillingly, for the alternative was the load of hardships to which the Empresses succumbed.

Her son by Hui Tsung, having been able to maintain himself as Emperor Kao Tsung of the Southern Sung, negotiated her release in 1142; also the return of the remains of his father and the two Empresses. Great honours and titles were bestowed upon her; her experiences among the Nü-Chêns being conveniently forgotten.

So was Ch'in Tsung. His release was never asked for. Had he returned, awkward questions would have arisen as to which of the brothers was entitled to the throne. It is not wise to start awkward questions. So the exile was left to his fate.

Dissensions in the Golden Dynasty culminated in the murder of Wu Ch'i-mai's successor, Wan-yen Tan, by Wan-yen Liang, another grandson of Akuta's.

A harsh, cruel man, he seems to have conceived a special hatred against the Sungs and Liaos. Anyone belonging to either of these families who had the misfortune of falling into his clutches was instantly killed. Ch'in Tsung was his first victim.

At a military review ostensibly got up for the delectation of His Golden Majesty, the unfortunate prisoner, crippled with rheumatism and unused to riding, was placed on a vicious horse and made to lead one troop of Nü-Chêns against another. According to a prearranged accident, he was hit by an arrow. He fell to the ground. Equally accidentally in the general

turmoil of galloping hoofs, his body was mangled to pulp. This hideous close of a tragic life occurred in 1156, one year after the death of the man on whose execrated name a share in the guilt of Ch'in Tsung's martyrdom and of other patriots' death is indelibly fixed—Ch'in Kuei. This official, who had accompanied the two Emperors in their exile as far as Yen Ching, shortly reappeared in his native city Nanking, where Prince K'ang had just proclaimed himself Emperor.

He is known as Kao Tsung, the first of the Southern Sungs, his fame distinctly tarnished by the fact that he allowed Ch'in Kuei to obtain a complete ascendancy over him.

Ch'in Kuei's story was that he had killed his Nü-Chên guards and daringly effected his escape. His subsequent conduct, however, lends colour to his enemies' accusation, that he bought his liberation from the Nü-Chêns by a promise to do his utmost to discredit the war party at the Court of the Southern Sungs.

The appellation Southern indicates not that there was a new milestone on the long road of Chinese dynasties, but that the old one had been shifted from Pien Liang on the Yellow River, first to Nanking on the Yangtze, ultimately to Lin An, the modern Hangchow, on the tidal river Tsien Tang, not thirty miles from the sea.

In between there were many shiftings, for during twelve terrible years the Chins were the comfortably, even luxuriously settled dynasty in Ae chu ku, Hu ming fu and Yen Ching, the Sungs, the roofless nomads, moving their residence about from place to place, according to the exigencies of the military situation.

Once even, in panic flight, they dashed across the sea to one of the Chusan Islands, north-east of Ningpo. Their best general, Tsung Tsê, who did not share this fear because he had beaten the dreaded spearmen in no less than thirteen battles, constantly urged Kao Tsung to return to the old capital, again clear of invaders. This hiding on the wrong side of the Yangtze struck him as unwarranted cowardice and with his very last breath he cried :

“Cross the river, cross the river.”

But Kao Tsung had not the stuff in him to follow such heroic advice. Like a hunted hare he ran in agonized circles round and round Kiang Su and Chekiang, his nerve lost, his brain obsessed by visions of his brother's scourgings, his father's blindness in the bleak wilds of the Sungari.

Worn out, he surrendered to the guidance of the minister who repeated day in day out he could have peace, security and a sufficiency of territory to continue an independent national



existence if only he would cease irritating those highly estimable Chins by warlike operations, in any case doomed to failure.

Whether this assumption was correct it is impossible to decide now. But the vehemence with which supremely able men like Tsung Tsê, Chu Hsi, Li Kang, Yo Fei opposed not a negotiated peace with honour, but the evil peace of humiliation which always follows unilateral disarmament, is strong evidence against the necessity of giving up the struggle for territory, the possession of which was undoubtedly vital to China's continued existence as a real power.

It is also clear that the apathy which in 1127 had allowed the invaders to reach Pien Liang almost unopposed, had been replaced by an ardent patriotism ready to fight hard for freedom.

The position of the Nü-Chên nominee became untenable. His toadstool throne collapsed under him and he slunk off the scene by suicide.

Born soldiers like Wang Lun and above all Yo Fei knocked great holes in the belief that the Nü-Chêns were invincible.

Yo Fei attacked them with their own weapon—cavalry, getting together, apparently on his own authority, 500 well-armed riders, such picked ones too, their valour became proverbial and the saying arose it was easier to move a mountain than the horsemen of Yo Fei. They became the nucleus of a formidable army which preserved large districts for the Sung and might have driven the Nü-Chêns back to within the old Khitan boundaries, if Kao Tsung had not been a mere puppet in the hands of Ch'in Kuei.

That these hands were kept well greased by Nü-Chên gold is highly probable. Victors enriched by loot and tribute can afford to, and generally do, bribe their way into the counsels of the defeated, so as to nullify all their efforts at liberation.

Li Kang, the old defender of Pien Liang, strongly opposed to meek acceptance of barbarian supremacy, remained Kao Tsung's minister for a bare seventy-seven days and was banished to a monastery in Lin An.

Chu Sung, Chu Hsi's father, resigned rather than remain in office under a government prepared to sell its country. Ch'in Kuei, loaded with honours by his Chinese and with wealth by his Nü-Chên master, applied himself with all the greater energy to destroy the war party by depriving it of its great rallying-point, Yo Fei and his army.

Ordered by the Nü-Chêns to expedite the peace negotiations and told Yo Fei was the main hindrance to their satisfactory conclusion, Ch'in Kuei sent urgent messages to Yo Fei to disband his troops. Next he brought charges of treason against

him and his son. Sure of his innocence and fondly imagining justice was a live thing, not a rotten make-believe, Yo Fei came to stand his trial in Lin An. Accused of disloyalty, he tore open his shirt and showed the scars of his wounds suffered in the country's cause, and the four characters Chin tsung pao guo (Devotion and loyalty to my country) tattooed into his skin even as they were stamped on all his actions. This unanswerable defence only hastened his doom. Ch'in Kuei, alarmed at the impression produced, silenced him for ever, getting him murdered in prison.

The other champion of Chinese independence, Wang Lun, had been as treacherously disposed of by the Nü-Chêns, when, being sent to them on a mission, he spurned their efforts to win him over to their side.

He was an envoy, he told them, not a renegade.

They feared him too much to let him go. So they hanged him.

In this manner, plutocrat, dispenser of Imperial favours, Duke, Ch'in Kuei secured the kind of peace the Golden Dynasty desired—but which made Chinese patriots cry out in anguished horror.

The greatest poet of those mournful days, Lu Yu, hoped against hope for a renewal of his country's strength, and on his death-bed exhorted his son to send him the good news, if ever they should come true :

“ When at last Imperial armies march  
To reconquer the Central Plain,  
Forget not at your household worship  
To whisper to your father's soul.”

But the message never came.

The old division between North and South of evil memory reappeared, and in an aggravated form. The Nü-Chên Empire bit considerably harder into Chinese soil than the Wei Tobas had ever done. The whole basin of the Yellow River, of the Wei and the Fen were lost.

Shantung itself with China's most sacred mountain and the Tomb of her greatest Sage fell under alien sway ; so did beautiful dreamy Lo yang after having been cruelly pillaged. One can deeply sympathize with men like Chu Hsi, who, steeped in the glories of their national history, condemned as godless sacrilege the surrender to barbarian keeping of places hallowed by the sublimest memories. It must be said, though, to their credit, that these barbarians proved less unworthy of this solemn trust than might have been expected,



The first Nü-Chên general to invade holy ground, on being told that K'ung Tzŭ's grave was that of a great sage of old, sternly forbade its violation.

In 1164 the fifth Chin Emperor, Wan yen P'ou, had the Confucian Classics translated into his mother tongue for the benefit of his subjects, and himself studied them to such advantage, he acquired a great name for benevolence and justice, and was actually called the lesser Yao and Shun.

His successor, Wan-yen Kung, worshipped in the Sage's Temple and prostrated himself before his tablet, in public acknowledgment that the temporal power honours itself by honouring the loftier power of ethics. He esteemed Chu Hsi's illuminating presentation of the ancient wisdom very highly, and it is stated that the Sung Emperor gave the philosopher a governorship in Hunan merely to forestall his receiving one from the Chins.

Chu Hsi's official career was altogether very chequered. His honesty, his unbending application of moral standards to politics, where by an unfortunate twist in the human mind the appeal to them is mostly considered absurdly tactless, earned him many enmities at Court.

Nor had any of the Emperors he served the insight which can recognize and make use of greatness. The Emperor Hsiao Tsung found Chu Hsi's memorials on the old but everlastingly true precept of "making the heart pure and motives sincere" insufferably boring, his memorials against official corruption positively annoying.

On one occasion on hearing them "the sacred lips no longer deigned to speak"; on another Imperial displeasure "rolled like thunder." Nevertheless, as it was impossible to ignore a man with the treble reputation of a great scholar, an unrivalled teacher and a successful and highly popular administrator, Chu Hsi was appointed Tutor to the Emperor Ning Tsung.

Like most of the Southern Sung, on whom the soft climate of the beautiful estuary of Lin An seems to have had a sadly relaxing effect, this Emperor was content to let others rule for him, and in his easygoing manner found it pleasanter to listen to the optimism of flatterers than to the stern warnings of honest advisers.

His brother-in-law, Han Ni-chou, an adept at Court intrigue, had therefore no difficulty of worming himself into far greater favour than was enjoyed by the unpleasantly truthful tutor.

Open enmity broke out between the honest scholar and the unscrupulous courtier. As might have been expected, the latter won all along the line. Not only was Chu Hsi deprived of office

and honours, but his books and the whole school of thought he and the former great Sung philosophers represented, were anathematized as a school of liars, rascals, heretics. For the corrupt when afraid of the righteous invariably resort to the mud-born device of blackening them, no doubt in the fond hope that their own shadiness will by contrast appear a chaste and spotless white.

Another angry edict followed, demanding from all candidates to office a clear repudiation of the heinous offence of being in the least degree contaminated by the accursed doctrines of the arch heretic and political traitor Chu Hsi.

The man so condemned by an artificially created public opinion, but acquitted by a fairer judge, his own conscience, did not lose his composure and was probably glad to shake the dust of the capital off his feet, retiring to his peaceful country-home.

There in the "Bamboo sheltered House Repose" he taught faithful pupils almost to his last hour. At seventy-one he passed away beyond his lecture hall, beyond his grave in the Valley of Great Forests, to live on for centuries as the teacher of his people, whom he loved so much, he would not let them be anything but just, generous, reverend, courteous, sincere—Chün tzes.

For this end he devoted his life to elucidating the ancient texts, in which his ideal had first crystallized. And he did this so skilfully, he completed the work begun by the wood-block printing, and made them the household possession of every family, the primer of every child, thereby giving his nation that inner strength which alone enabled it to pass through the ordeal of a brutal alien domination almost unscathed.

It was impossible to prevent the light of Chu Hsi's greatness from shining through all the thick layers of official tar. The Imperial thunder muttering anathemas against him did not outlast the life of the man who had set it rolling. Han Ni-chou, having failed to beat the Nü-Chêns in hostilities he rashly started, was murdered in 1207 and his head sent to the Chin Emperor in token of submission and repentance.

The next Sung Emperor, Li Tsung, was a great admirer of Chu Hsi's writings, gave them official recognition and in 1227 posthumously bestowed on their author the title of Duke, thus providing his people with a spiritual leader, a tower of strength and endurance in the terrible times that were drawing near.



## CHAPTER XXII

### JENGHIS KHAN AND HIS BROOD

FOR by a strange coincidence, that very same year, the mighty Mongol warrior Jenghis Khan died on former Chin territory, in north-western Kansuh. It was he who set the third of the great nomad waves in motion and in a motion of such violence, Kingdoms were washed away, wiped out, tossed up by its fury as pebbles are flung about by the foam of storm-swept seas. Mongol clans, Tartar tribes, the Naimans, the Kara-Khitans, the Uighurs, the Hsias, the Nü-Chêns, the sultanates of Turkestan and Persia with their splendid cities Bokhara, Samarkand, Balk, Nishapur, the Ismaelians, better known as "Assassins," in inaccessible mountain strongholds, Turks, Russians, Poles, Hungarians were hit by the force of his onslaught and either wholly destroyed or dangerously wounded in disastrous defeats.

From the banks of the Yalü to those of the Dnieper, across the plains and mountain ranges of northern China, along the old trade-routes to the West, by which jade merchants and Buddhist pilgrims used to travel, over the heights of the Hindu Kush into Afghanistan, Persia, down to the basin of the Indus and further into Armenia, the Crimea, Russia, he took his hardy Mongols either himself or sent them there under the leadership of carefully chosen, personally devoted generals and of his four sons trained to war almost from before their birth.

It was one of his grandsons Batu, who, in 1241, defeated the German knights in Silesia and was preparing to ravage Central Europe when fate, for once merciful, intervened and drew him off his quarry by the news of his uncle Ogotai's death in distant Karakorum. Eastern Europe, however, remained crushed under the hoofs of the Golden Mongol Horde till well into the fifteenth century.

It is this gigantic western extension which differentiates the Mongol movement radically from the two preceding nomad irruptions, those of the Khitans and the Nü-Chêns, and links it up with the great trek of the Huns centuries before. But

whereas the Huns on moving West lost connexion with the East, the Mongols maintained theirs and consequently dominated an area of such dimensions, only the immense spread and hardiness of their horses, and the phenomenally efficient organization of their man-power enabled them to hold it together in the dread of their arrows.

This efficiency was partly due to the prospect, soon amounting to certainty, of enormous booty, which attracted all the brigands of the steppe to Jenghis Khan's banner, kept them there and made them willingly submit to the severe discipline he enforced on the march and in battle. The reward of the victories, which they had the sense to know were due to this discipline, compensated them for any and every hardship,—the reward being days, sometimes weeks of complete license in the conquered cities, unlimited freedom to commit as many abominations as they chose on defenceless populations.

The appalling massacres, lootings and burnings Jenghis Khan's armies inflicted on the rich cities of Persia and Turkestan should not be entirely attributed to gratuitous cruelty, rather to the impossibility of keeping vast hordes of wild hunters in hand without occasionally providing breathing-holes for their pent-up savagery.

Further, Jenghis Khan's army was not a new creation but a copy of the system used by the Khitan A-pao-chi and later by the Nü-Chên Akuta and fully tested as the best for welding loosely federated quarrelsome clans into a homogeneous army under centralized control.

Also the superior armament, particularly the siege artillery, possessed by the Muslims was taken over in large quantities.

But the most decisive factor was the third, namely Jenghis Khan's personality, built on such a gigantic scale, endowed with such a superabundance of power it continued to act years beyond his death. His descendants piously preserved not only the simple dress he wore but the ambition of world conquest that had set his soul on fire.

No one can tell how it came to him, the young inexperienced head of a particularly insignificant Mongol tribe, pitching its tents along the banks of the Kerulen and the Onon. But the thirst for endless exploration, for subjugation of that defiant distance always lurks in the immense horizons stretching boundless over boundless plains, ever ready to quicken an awakening life with the summons to adventure and great deeds.

Jenghis Khan, or Temuchin as he was then, certainly had the stuff in him to respond to such a call. Wild blood flowed in his veins.



A remote ancestor had been miraculously fed in the wilderness by a hawk, and hawks remained his descendants' brothers to the last. An ancestress Mono-lun, a virago stinging as a Gobi hurricane, and left a widow with seven sons, once flew into such a rage with some trespassers who were digging for roots on the family pasture-ground, she drove at them full tilt again and again, knocking down many, killing several. Her exploit had a bad sequel. The damaged youths swore revenge and got it.

Mono-lun, her six sons and all her clan were wiped out, all except ten sick old women, one little grandson Hai Tu whom his nurse had hidden under bundles of firewood, and one son who was away from his home just when disaster overtook them.

The fifth descendant of this Hai Tu was Yesukai, Temuchin's father. He was just coming home from some victorious affray, when his chief wife presented him with a male infant, who held a clot of blood like a crimson stone tightly in his little fist. At which the father marvelled greatly.

He had done much to raise the wealth and standing of his clan, but died before his son was fully grown up. Consequently the tribal leadership passed into the hands of the related but not particularly friendly clan of T'ai Ch'ih Wu. Numbers of hunters deserted to him.

Temuchin wept, but his mother, also an incarnated Gobi whirlwind, seized a banner, gathered some horsemen, galloped after the deserters and succeeded in dragging half of them back by the scruff of the neck. They became the nucleus of that stupendous army which laid half Asia at her son's feet.

By constant practice in raids and onslaughts, and also by giving them more horses and furs than the neighbouring chieftains gave their men, young Temuchin increased the number of his followers after a while sufficiently to attack his powerful neighbours, the Naimans.

These, settled round the upper Irtitsch, seem to have absorbed remnants of the Nestorian Christians driven out of China by T'ang persecutions. But this did not affect their old faith in the elemental forces, which indeed are the invincible masters of the steppe.

When Temuchin fell upon them, the Naimans sacrificed to the Gods of Wind and Snow, imploring them to be propitious to their arms. But the Gods had taken Temuchin to their fickle heart, blew into his enemies' faces, piled up the snow in gigantic drifts, in which the Naimans lost their way and perished, Temuchin's arrows whistling dismal death songs in their ears as they floundered, slipped and fell

Nevertheless, it took Temuchin another two years before he had brought them completely to heel. Other tribes impressed by his daring submitted to him of their own accord.

Consequently by 1206 he was able to set up the great white nine-tailed banner near the source of the river Onon, where he had been born, and summon a Kuriltai, the assembly of chieftains who unanimously acclaimed him Jenghis Khan, Jenghis in ancient days meaning a huge wonder bird of five-coloured plumage and of such strength his name became the synonym of anything amazingly powerful. To prove that he deserved this inspiring appellation, the new monarch of the nomads stopped the tribute for centuries paid first to the Liaos, then to the Chins.

The Chin Emperor, Chang Tsung, at once sent his uncle Wan-yen Yün-chi, prince of Wei, north to find out the reason for such impertinence and demand prompt satisfaction. The prince was received coldly and bowed home again empty-handed.

Shortly afterwards Chang Tsung died and left Wan-yen Yün-chi the throne.

Again a Chin embassy arrived at Jenghis Khan's camp, this time to announce the change of Emperors and to demand the customary prostration from the Mongol Khan in token of vassalage. But the days of vassalage were over.

Far from humbly prostrating himself, Temuchin contemptuously spat towards the south in the direction of the Chin capital. This meant war. Jenghis Khan undertook it so light-heartedly not only because he had nothing to lose and everything to gain by an attack on China, but because fugitives from Nü-Chên oppression had reported to him very unfavourably on their military strength.

The Golden Dynasty with few really able rulers remained throughout inferior to the Iron one they had dispossessed, and with the exception of Shih Tsung had not attempted to win the love either of their Chinese or their Khitan subjects. Consequently the first determined attack from without opened up all the old wounds and resentments.

Notwithstanding Wan-yen Liang's massacre in 1150, there were Yeh-lüs, descendants of A-pao-chi, left, some in high posts.

Not unnaturally they saw in the invading Mongols friends rather than enemies.

One Yeh-lü thought the moment auspicious for reviving his family's greatness, deserted the Chins and proclaimed himself King of Liao.

That pretension he had to abandon, but another Yeh-lü, Yeh-



lǐ Chu tsai, taken prisoner by the Mongols on their seizure of Yen Ching in 1215, found such favour in Jenghis Khan's eyes, thanks to his tall stature, splendid beard and remarkable intelligence, he became one of his most trusted advisers and rendered invaluable services in mitigating the horrors of Mongolian conquest.

One Chin general, possibly also of Khitan descent, withdrew from an important pass without waiting to be attacked ; others openly seceded, setting up independent commands, or joining the enemy ; none was able to beat the Mongol army either in pitched battles on the field, or from behind the ramparts of fortified towns.

In 1213 the Chin Emperor was murdered and replaced by his nephew Wan-yen Hsün, in the foolish hope the change of rulers might produce a change of luck.

By 1215, 862 Chin cities were in Jenghis Khan's hands. Recording the capture of some of them the chronicler laconically remarks "the Mongol general butchered." Amplified, this means that the entire garrison and at least three-quarters of the inhabitants were completely wiped out. The clot of blood in the baby's fist on the Onon was beginning to swell into the crimson flood which drowned millions of wholly innocent and often highly valuable lives.

Years after, travellers passing the dread places, where Mongols and Nü-Chêns had taken a hideous delight in slaying each other, saw fields covered with bleached, unburied human bones. On the Nü-Chên side there were soon not many left to bury the dead, though at one time, in 1214, at the first siege of their central capital Chung Tu (the modern Peking), a tolerable peace still seemed possible.

The hot season was coming on during which Jenghis Khan never fought. For the price of large quantities of grain, gold, brocade, 500 male and female slaves, 3,000 horses, two Imperial princesses, he consented to withdraw. The Chin Emperor, Hsüan Tsung, however, had strong suspicions he would come back and also withdrew, only in the opposite direction, hurrying south to Pien Liang, often used as a capital by his predecessors, and comfortingly well fortified.

A renewed and intensified Mongol invasion before the year was out, fully justified this strategic retreat. Yen Ching was besieged again, the Chin army sent to its relief, beaten. Then the governor in despair committed suicide, and the Mongol host swept in.

The Sung Emperor, Ning Tsung, immediately stopped the yearly present of 200,000 ounces of silver and 300,000 rolls of

silk which the Nü-Chên parasites had sucked out of China so long.

Their power to oppress was gone ; everything north of the Yellow River lost, even Shantung in Mongol hands. In Pien Liang though and south up to the Sung frontier, in Lo yang and the Wei Valley they held out for another nineteen years, largely because Jenghis Khan needed the bulk of his troops to conquer the West.

But a wearing state of semi-warfare troubled these years more or less continuously, except where the Chinese or Khitan governors secured peace by voluntary acknowledgment of Mongol suzerainty. Two sovereigns died over this long-drawn-out conflict, the Chin Hsüan Tsung in 1224, and three years later the mighty Jenghis Khan himself.

His dying instructions referred to the surest way of annihilating the Chins, whose repeated appeals for peace he had always ignored. He advised co-operation with their hereditary foes, the Sung. And it was due to the assistance of the Sung, that Jenghis Khan's son and successor Ogotai did after two desperate sieges, the first in 1231, the last in 1233, succeed in forcing Pien Liang to surrender.

The beautiful rocks which had adorned the palace gardens of Hui Tsung were broken up and hurled down on the assailing Mongols. These in their turn, assisted by the Chinese, set up catapults which bombarded the city with stones. The last sovereign of the Golden Dynasty, Hsüan Tsung's son Wan-yen Shou hsui, fled south to Ju Ning Fu, and made his last stand there, after the army he led to the relief of Pien Liang had been utterly defeated, and Pien Liang itself taken.

Pressed hard by Chinese and Mongols, half the garrison slain, the bastions crumbling, provisions exhausted, he gave up the struggle, took the Imperial seal, mounted a cart loaded with straw, had it set on fire and cut his throat.

The victors divided his jewels and his charred bones between them. Five hundred of his followers, faithful unto death, leapt into the river and were drowned. The wild Nü-Chêns' day of power was ended for ever.

Hui Tsung's humiliation, Ch'in Tsung's long martyrdom were avenged at last. And if the Mongol impulse had not still been in flood, the blessings of Sung sovereignty would have received a new lease of life.

But the steppe had been stirred up too profoundly for its expansive thrust to exhaust itself in one lifetime ; several generations had to go down in sorrow to their graves before some righting of the wrongs of Mongol conquests could at last



emerge out of the ruins they had made. For all the havoc, which the slow grinding down of the Nü-Chên Empire entailed, the destruction wrought by the Mongols in the West was infinitely greater.

One reason for this was, that Jenghis Khan's attack on the West sprang not from mere lust of conquest, but from a passionate hunger for revenge.

A mission of peaceful traders he had sent in perfect good faith to the Sultan of Chovaresm, had been treacherously murdered in one of the Sultan's cities, Otrar. Jenghis saw red when he heard of it.

Three days and three nights on a lone mountain, bare-headed, on his knees, he cried to the great sky above for utmost retribution.

And when his intense preparation, involving the building of numerous bridges and immense lengths of road, did succeed in delivering the whole sultanate into his hand, that hand knew no mercy. But the Sultan's armies, too, were made up of ruthless men; as the war spread, it developed into a collision between two equally fierce and bloodthirsty fighters, the semi-savage northern nomads on one side, the fanatical Muslims, half-Arab, half-Turk, on the other. Town after town was pillaged, burnt, annihilated, the inhabitants butchered wholesale, the open country churned into a desert.

Once Jenghis Khan from his summer camp surrounded by masses of comfortable tents, roomy carts, excellent provisions, ordered the pitiable wretches who had crept back to the ruins which had been their homes to be driven out and slain, man, woman and child.

In Samarkand three-quarters of the inhabitants were massacred, the remainder robbed so mercilessly, travellers were surprised at the multitude and misery of the destitute.

In Nishapur, out of a large and wealthy population, only 400 artisans were spared, and those were dragged away into the bleakness of Mongolia to toil for barbarian masters.

Bokhara, a famous centre of trade and learning, was reduced to one mosque and a few plundered palaces, the walls of which had resisted pickaxes and flames.

On the capture of Termed, hearing that some of the people had tried to save their pearls and precious stones by swallowing them, the whole population was sliced open.

In Herat the looting, burning and killing lasted a whole week and ended in one and a half million corpses emitting such a stench, the butchers themselves felt nauseated.

Similar horrors might have overtaken Pien Liang, if Yeh-

lū Chu-ts'ai, the Khitan Long-beard, had not succeeded in persuading Ogotai, that corpses and ruins yield no sort of revenue, that those industrious Pien Liang weavers, embroiderers, copper-smiths, jewellers, carpenters could only be useful to him if left alive and undisturbed in their quiet workshops.

Ogotai, who in his sober moments was a capable ruler, accordingly agreed to limit massacre to the members of the Chin Dynasty. Once before Yeh-lū Chu-ts'ai had proved a guardian angel to the helpless, turning Mongol wrath aside.

First when Jenghis Khan, irritated by the many obstacles the minutely divided, carefully tilled fields of Northern China presented to the sweep of his cavalry, swore he would wipe out cultivators and cultivation and level all these farmlands into pasture-grounds for Mongol horses. Then it was Yeh-lū Chu-ts'ai who made him see he could get more out of the country in grain, silver and silk by allowing both soil and population to continue as heretofore. So the Chinese peasants got off with nothing worse than taxation, and to that they were thoroughly accustomed.

Another time Jenghis Khan, coveting the wealth of India, was on his march thither, to slay, burn and ravage, when he met a strange animal, green, one-horned, part deer, antelope and horse. It seemed to bid him turn back.

Immediately Yeh-lū Chu-ts'ai, seeing his chance of doing good, interpreted the mysterious creature as an apparition of the horned monitor sent by Heaven weary of seeing men perish and warning the great Conqueror to let a remnant live.

Whereupon Jenghis Khan, perhaps himself beginning to wonder whether mass killing yielded any real satisfaction, did turn back.

At that period he seems altogether to have been thinking of greater things than the capture of the material world by brute force.

Away in the mountain wilds of Shantung there lived an aged Taoist, Ch'ang Ch'un. He had reduced his claims on material possessions to almost nothing and in return obtained such a fund of holiness and wisdom his fame was greater than that of the red-handed Mongol Khan. It was said that all the secrets of eternal life lay before him like an open book. Wherefore both the Sung and the Chin Emperors had entreated him to come to their capitals. But possibly with foreknowledge of the future he would not leave his beloved solitude for them.

It was different when he was summoned by Jenghis Khan, although the journey to his camp was terribly long and arduous. It took him in the wake of the triumphant Mongol progress a



distance of thousands of miles from the flower-grown seclusion of the Temple of White Clouds in Yen Ching, through the Nan Kou pass, beyond the inner, beyond the outer Great Wall, beyond the eastern rampart with which the Chin Emperor Chang Tsung had sought to protect his north-western frontier, right unto "cold sandy deserts, parched grass" and ghostly, bone-strewn battlefields, across the Golden Mountains, the Southern mountains, the Heavenly Mountains, the Mountains of Gloom and Uttermost Frost with views of "Peaks supporting the horizon" and ranges "glittering like a silver dawn" in their mantle of eternal snow; down along the shores of a lake reflecting those glorious peaks in bright blue depths, over a summit arched like a rainbow, a steepness of thousands of feet between the path and the face of the lake, on through the infinite desolation of acres of sand, unbroken even by the presence of stones, the desert whirled by the wind into yellow clouds or wandering dunes "swimming like giant ships" in an ocean of sand; through forests of pine trees and elm trees a hundred feet high, over willow-fringed rivers "bubbling and gurgling like sonorous jade," crossing them on horseback, by boat, on old bridges of stone, on light bridges of planks and strong bridges of logs constructed by Jenghis Khan's son for the great march West; past solitary wells sunk in prairie grass trampled by the multitudinous feet of herds of horses and flocks of sheep, past nomad settlements of "white tents" and black carts, past the movable palace of one of Jenghis Khan's principal wives, past ruined cities of the Western Liao, traces of forgotten grave mounds and military encampments, past commissariat depots of grain and little townships, once garrison cities of the T'angs, past fields saved from the wilderness by a network of canals, along vineyards and orchards into Samarkand, beautiful still in the midst of gardens and groves, with the Sultan's palace intact on a hillock in the centre of the town, and life with its indestructible tenacity beginning to circulate again in bazaars and streets despite the many beggars and the heaps of slaughtered buried only a bare eighteen months.

There in the palace, Ch'ang Ch'un and his disciples rested through the winter waiting for further instructions from Jenghis Khan, still too busy beating down the last spasms of the Sultan's resistance to have time to listen to the teachings of a sage.

The sage spent his time better, bringing the comfort of his wisdom to the Chinese dwelling in Samarkand, among them a learned astronomer. He had met compatriots at other points of his journey, near snow-covered mountains at a Mongol

encampment, to which they came to greet him with "fragrant flowers and coloured umbrellas," a procession of delegates from a group of 300 families of wool weavers, whom Jenghis Khan had dragged from their far homes, probably burnt to the ground, and settled in the wilds of his own dominions together with an equal number of gold brocade weavers from the West.

The poor exiles were beside themselves with joy at seeing one of their own kith and kin. On this occasion, as well as in the camp of Jenghis Khan's wife, he also met Chinese ladies, princesses and concubines of the Golden Dynasty, war prizes of the Mongol victors:

While preparing for his long trek he had even been threatened with the company of a large number of maidens whom Jenghis Khan's purveyor of pleasures had collected and was going to transport to one of his travelling palaces. The holy man protested strongly and the female cargo was sent by another route.

At last, in May, 1222, two years after leaving Yen Ching, he met the mighty Conqueror in his camp, pitched on the lower slopes of the Hindu Kush, but moved higher to the "snowy mountains" when the hot season set in.

There in sight of towering peaks, stupendous waterfalls and rushing torrents, they talked to each other, they tried to understand each other these two men, the two greatest of their world, the man of conquest and bloodshed, the man of renunciation and compassion, the man who loved solitude and silence, content in spring to lie in the grass watching peach blossoms drop and talking of immortal things; in summer to sit at a northern window, lost in thought, the breeze passing softly over his white hair. The other who revelled in the clatter of camps, the excitement of the hunt, the combining of gigantic movements leading to the crushing of a foe, to the spreading of death, terror, desolation, the man who loved to amass the gold, the silks, the corals, the pearls, the women of the defeated, not because they meant anything to him, but because he delighted to call them his own to play with an hour, the next give them away or destroy them.

The presence of the man of peace did not prevent Jenghis Khan interrupting his summer rest for renewed warfare and it was only in autumn on his way back, after recrossing the Amur Daria, that in a specially prepared tent Ch'ang Ch'un explained the doctrine of the Tao to the Conqueror, whose descendants were to rule the country where it first was taught.

It "pleased his heart" and a few days later, on a moonlit night, he bade the Sage tell him more about this way of Heaven,



Earth and Man, established as the Way of Kings by the Lord of the Yellow Soil, prolonged by Lao Tze into ultimate beginnings, opened by K'ung Tzŭ for the use of all honest men, lately illustrated by the thoughts of artists, poets, philosophers; a way of indestructible power and eternal life following which hate, impatience, violence were the empty echoes of illusion.

An interpreter translated the Sage's words into Mongol. Jenghis Khan surely understood them well, for despite his insatiable lust of conquest, there was greatness in his soul. Free of the vanity which hates to acknowledge merit in others, he was a generous, just and inspiring master, and his emotions had a large-hearted sincerity which even clothes his appalling vindictiveness with a certain grandeur. The venerable Sage really impressed him, although he did not supply the drug of immortality he had at first expected from him. He ordered his teachings to be written down both in Mongol and Chinese and all Taoists to be exempted from taxation. He would have liked to keep the holy man permanently at his side, but the latter had promised to be back in three years' time and was moreover weary of the noise and bustle of the Conqueror's camp.

So they parted, the Sage to return to the peaceful temple of the White Clouds, where in the summer of 1227 he passed away to yet greater peace, yet fuller understanding of the luminous way he had followed so faithfully; Jenghis Khan to walk a very different way, his way, the way of the destructive Desert dust, not the way of the Fruitful yellow earth or of the bounteous sky.

He went on slaying men and beasts and stamped out the independence of the Hsi Hsia whose raids used to trouble the northern Sung. This added the forty-first to the number of Kingdoms he had destroyed in his reign of twenty-two years.

Shortly afterwards, also in the summer of 1227, he sickened and died, as he had been born, on the banks of a river, in a white felt tent, his last words breathing aggression and war.

Ch'ang Ch'un's eloquence in sight of the eternal snows of the far-away Hindu Kush had not sunk deep into that Mongol brain. Once though an echo of it, joined to an unusual planetary conjunction, prompted him to vow there should be an end of killing and looting. Only in the press of affairs he forgot to give the orders which would have made this vow effective.

So his sons inherited war from him—not peace. But as apart from a little book-knowledge he had tried to get instilled into them, they were all trained as soldiers and he left them

amply supplied with the means of gratifying their tastes for aggression without much risk to themselves, they honoured him all the more for his legacy of blood and fire, and carried it East and South and West—completing, consolidating, extending the conquests he had begun. And they did this not because they had in any way inherited his military genius, but because he had bequeathed them a gigantic organization which continued to move by the impetus of its own weight, carrying every one with it.

Its pivot, of course, was the army, welded into a weapon of deadly precision by iron discipline and a staff of capable leaders, pupils of Jenghis Khan and tamed by his greatness into blind devotion to his clan. To disband this army would have been a more difficult task than to continue using and leading it on to fresh conquests, which meant fresh plunder, distinctly needed in face of the dire poverty raging in all the districts previously annexed and looted.

The administrative system which Jenghis Khan had built up with the help of Yeh-lü Chu-ts'ai and some learned Uighurs in his service, was also better adapted to a growing military than to a stationary pacific state. It was carried on by means of tallies and seals, law-tables, edicts, records, necessitating writing.

Therefore the Uighurs advisers' evolved a simple script out of their own, which centuries ago Nestorian priests had brought them from Syria.

Speed and security of communications, the loyalty of princes and nobles to each other and to the chief Khan, finding suitable expression in the great clan gatherings, the Kuriltai, also the terrified obedience into which the enormous blood-letting of the actual conquest had cowed the destitute remnants of the original population, kept the forty-one states, which Jenghis Khan's cavalry had pounded into one, united under Mongol sway.

In the annexed territory this was embodied in a Mongol governor and garrison. But as the Mongols, therein at least a decided improvement on the Arabs, carried no holy book with them to be rammed down the throat of the conquered at the point of the sword, but made war simply for the sake of plunder, their governing consisted almost wholly in the collection of taxes in kind and service, and the repression of all robbery except their own.

Provided the greed of the governor and his satellites could be satisfied and no attempts at revolt were indulged in, the subjugated were allowed a fair measure of self-government.



Neither their national nor their religious customs were interfered with. Indeed what was left of Buddhists and Christians in Turkestan probably breathed more freely under Mongol than under Muslim rule.

Only in their own encampments the Mongols would not stand any infraction of their cherished taboo against washing. Some Mahommedans who ventured to bathe there were slain as perpetrators of an outrageous offence.

It was these unwashed, uncouth, illiterate barbarians who were now to collide with the subtle thinkers, refined scholars, profound artists, incomparable craftsmen and cultivators, the subjects of the Southern Sung. It meant the impact of two worlds separated not merely by centuries of development but by such fundamental differences of vision as condemned the intercourse between them at its best to sterility, at its worst to mutual destruction. On the one hand, the broad-faced, coarse-featured Mongols, hard riders, drinkers, fighters, hunters, living in rough tents on kumiss and chunks of meat, who would steal their relations' harness and fodder, and to settle the resulting dispute, belabour each other vigorously with milk-pails; hardy, brawny, muscular creatures, so immersed in the concrete they never felt the need of a picture or a book, incapable of any less primitive and cruel enjoyment than that of hunting and killing. On the other side, the Sung Chinese, the most inwardly and outwardly civilized people who ever made earth a truly God-given dwelling-place, who lived in well-built, tastefully decorated houses, in cities amply supplied with markets, shops, baths, schools, libraries, who ate choicely prepared, endlessly varied food, served on exquisite porcelains and lacquers, who dressed in soft silks and delighted in the beauties of nature and the intellectual joys of art, scholarship, religion, a nation of whom Marco Polo could write even after long years of humiliating subjection :

“ One hears of no feuds or noisy quarrels or dissensions of any kind among them. Both in their commercial dealings and in their manufactures they are thoroughly honest and truthful, and there is such a degree of goodwill and neighbourly attachment among both men and women, that you would take these people who live in the same street to be all one family. . . .”

“ They also treat the foreigners who visit them for the sake of trade with great cordiality, entertain them in the most winning manner, affording them every help and advice on their business.”

“ The capital was so secure, doors were not closed at night, not even in houses and shops full of all sorts of rich merchandise. No one could do justice in the telling to the great riches of that country and to the good disposition of the people.”

Of the Emperor, however, he draws a less flattering picture, describing him as "passing his life in constant dalliance with women without so much as knowing what arms meant."

This, though exaggerated, as hearsay accounts mostly are, does hit the weak spot of the Southern Sung Emperors. Not one of them took a practical interest in military matters or personally led his troops in manœuvres and campaigns, a neglect which could not fail to react unfavourably on what with such neighbours as the Mongols had become a vital question—the efficiency of the army.

Not that the Sung army was bad. The long and splendid defence put up by several cities when the Mongol menace turned to grim reality, proves the contrary; but it lacked unity of organization and inspiring leadership.

There were, however, several cogent reasons for the extreme demilitarization of the Supreme Authority. Deprived by the Nü-Chêns of the hardiest half of the Chinese population, all armed attempts at liberation having ended in failure, a policy of peace and concentration on creative activity seemed the only wise one. And when one considers how frightfully Turkestan and Persia had to pay for the strength and fierceness of their resistance to Mongol conquest, when one compares the utterly devastated state of those countries after their subjugation with that of Southern China, which Marco Polo could describe as possessing "numbers of great and rich towns and villages flourishing with trade and manufactures with all the necessities of life in profusion," then it must be admitted that the pacifism of the Sungs, far from causing Mongol aggression, attenuated its direct consequences to such an extent, it prevented the cultured life of their people from being irreparably mutilated.

Indeed, they followed the instinctive defence of the race by bowing before a storm whose magnitude made open defiance suicidal. Nor can they be blamed for expecting the nomad flood to halt on the northern banks of the Yangtze.

The experience of centuries of history supported this belief. Distance from their base, difficulties of standing the warm damp climate South of that line, had always made the invaders stop there, and supplied a barrier behind which Chinese independence was comparatively safe. That the demoniac energy of Jenghis Khan had spread Mongol tentacles far West whence they sucked up additional forces of men and war material was such a novel factor, the average statesman, steeped in precedent, very naturally left it out of his calculations.

The Southern Sung suffered the penalty of all over-optimistic pacifism and produced no statesman of more than average



ability—if that. Some, notably Chia Ssü-t'ao, even fell considerably below.

Nor was Tu Tsung, the last actually reigning Sung Emperor, the type of man to retrieve a difficult situation, in spite of all the care his father Li Tsung had bestowed on his education.

Li Tsung was the Emperor who gave the stamp of official recognition to Chou Tun-i and Chu Hsi's teaching and made Ssü-ma Kuang's history obligatory in all schools. His forty years' reign was perhaps the happiest of any among those of the southern Sung.

Some of the great artists, Ma Yüan and his son Ma Lin, also the inimitable Hsia Kuei, whom Ning Tsung had decorated with the Golden Girdle, may still have been alive ; their inspiration certainly was, and a new generation of first-class painters like Chien hsien, the Hermit of the Jade Pool and the Roaring Torrent, and Chao Mêng-fu, a descendant of the first Sung Emperor, was beginning to grow up.

Economically harvests were plentiful, handicrafts prosperous and creative. Politically, at home, party strife had ceased with the victory of the moderates, abroad the crash of the detested Chins brought the joys of revenge and the hope of a return to China's proper boundaries.

That hope was soon squashed by Ogotai's armies, but thanks to disputes among Jenghis Khan's descendants and to the fact that the bulk of their forces were absorbed by expeditions in the West, in Tonking, and Tibet, optimists seemed to have reason on their side, when they assumed a peaceful *modus vivendi* could be arranged between the Chinese and their new neighbours.

Under Ogotai, strongly influenced by the wise Yeh-lü Chu-ts'ai, a tolerable form of government seems to have been established in the former Chin provinces. No less than 4,030 Chinese scholars, duly tested in their knowledge of the Classics by Yeh-lü Chu-ts'ai, himself a distinguished scholar, were given responsible posts in the civil administration and probably made the lot of the native population less hard than it had been under the wild Nü-Chêns.

Consequently the hold of the Mongols over the northern provinces was quite strong and that in spite of Ogotai's drunkenness and his widow Naimachên's infatuation for one of those Muslim adventurers who gathered like vultures in the wake of the Mongol armies to fatten on the defeated.

When Ogotai died in 1241, Naimachên seized the regency first for her step-grandson Shih lieh-mên, and since 1246 for her own son Kuyak.

But she managed to displease everybody, Mongols, Chinese, Khitans. Yeh-lü Chu-ts'ai was subjected to so much suspicion and annoyance that he died broken-hearted in 1247, which did not prevent his detractors from nosing among his possessions, expecting to find the amount of wealth they would have piled up if they had had his opportunities. They were grievously disappointed—a lute and some books were the only objects his house contained.

Not long afterwards, in 1248, Kuyak's life also came to an end.

His widow Ogulganish tried to imitate Naimachên, but the Mongol nobles and princes were sick of petticoat government and at a great Kuriltai of 1257 unanimously set Ogotai's line aside and elected his brother Tuli's eldest son Mangu, Great Khan.

This title still carried a good deal of authority with it, though the continuing expansion of Mongol rule tended to increase the independence of the subordinate Khans, in spite of the effort to turn the old meeting-place on the Orkhon Karakorum or Forest peace (Holin), as the Chinese called it, into a real capital.

Already in 1235 it had been surrounded by an earth wall—then buildings sprang up instead of tents. By 1252 it had a sumptuous hall for the Khan, with a throne of ivory inlaid with gold, a Chinese and a Muslim street at right angles to each other, markets at each of the four gates, twelve pagodas, two mosques, one Nestorian Church.

The population consisted of a motley crowd of war prisoners from many countries and adventurers of every species, besides Arab, Persian, Indian, Chinese, Jewish traders, one jeweller from Russia, another from Paris, a German woman from Metz, Nestorian priests from Syria, frequently drunk, according to the unfriendly report of Roman Catholic friars sent on diplomatic missions by the Pope and Christian Kings, ascetic Taoists, Tibetan Buddhists, Mongol shamans, Uighur notaries, Chinese scholars, Greek doctors, an amalgam of all creeds, colours, costumes, histories, inquisitive, uprooted, volatile, without soul or style or grammar—international.

Ogotai had established well-equipped post stations along the great roads to link up this queer immovable Capital of a nomad Empire with the main camps of Khatuns and lesser Khans, with remote garrisons in conquered cities and ports on distant frontiers, where other swarms of international dealers brought their merchandise and drove their bargains.

Paper money facilitated the exchange of goods without



depleting the Khan's stock of bullion, and backed by Mongol cavalry, provided Mongol nobles and their ladies with more silks and gold cloth, pearls and corals, cups of jade and tankards of gold than their parents had ever dreamt of.

The ladies soon learnt to exchange their simple fur garments for the elaborate fashions of their civilized neighbours, and to array themselves in Chinese satins and tall Uighur head-dresses—a fine scaffolding for the mass display of their favourite jewels—pearls.

But to the inner values of the cultured nations with whom they came into contact, peaceful or violent, they opposed a stolid front of complete indifference. The eloquence of Taoists, the chanting of friars made no impression on their massive conviction that Heaven had given them a mission to destroy all nations East and West who refused to submit to them. As the testimony of current events entirely supported this view they could see no reason whatsoever for changing it, and they suffered the holy men of the most various denominations to live on their bounty and practise their diverse rituals unmolested only, because they expected a great increase of good luck from such a multiplication of prayers, one form of prayers appearing as efficacious to them as another.

Two religions, however, so totally opposed to each other that it is odd that they both could capture one and the same people, did finally succeed in imposing themselves on Jenghis Khan's descendants, namely, Buddhism and Islam.

The latter, with its faith in the divine mission of the sword, did of course square with the Mongol belief in the righteousness of conquests. Besides, it was in the strong position of being the cherished creed of the bulk of the inhabitants of Turkestan and Persia. And their Mongol rulers were, therefore, tempted by political as well as by religious considerations to become followers of the Prophet.

The conversion of the Mongols ruling eastern Asia by Buddhism, that religion of peace, mercy, inwardness and supreme detachment from the ties of material existence, all doctrines teaching the very opposite of what Mongols naturally practised, seems much stranger. It can, however, be accounted for by the accidental presence at the Mongol Court of Buddhists personally extremely pleasing to the Khans. And what made them so pleasing was the mental affinity that existed between them and their hosts, for they were Lamas of Tibet, that is, monks whose Buddhism was so saturated with magical practices and crude materializations of the divine idea, inherited from the primitive beliefs of India and Tibet, as to be

immediately comprehensible to the simple Mongol brain, far more so than the purer Buddhism of the Chinese monasteries.

The tragic incapacity of Sung refinement of exercising any influence on its uncivilized neighbours showed itself once more. Practically without a struggle, it yielded the unique opportunity of acquiring the spiritual leadership of its conquerors to the robuster, more worldly-wise, though less saintly Tibetan Lamaism. The ambition of the Khan to assert Mongol suzerainty over Tibet, almost impregnable behind its gigantic mountain barriers, by purely military means, had no doubt also something to do with the favour they showed its ecclesiastical dignitaries, already at that time representing the strongest political force in the country. But success was due to bonds of genuine human sympathy, the outcome of cultural affinity.

Imageless, sternly ethical Confucianism with its reverence for permanent tombs and immovable family fields, held no message for the nomad.

The Taoist pantheon, though populous, was yet too grave and unsubstantial; the silently meditating Buddha of the Chinese monasteries too highly intellectualized to appeal to him.

The Christian, then in full crusading frenzy, tried his hardest to win this new military power for Catholicism. But their God helplessly nailed to a cross seemed too contemptibly weak to inspire confidence in insatiable conquerors. The fiercely grinning, flame-haired, red-faced, green-faced, black-faced, triple-faced Lama divinities, brandishing a hundred arms, glaring out of a dozen eyes, crushing enemies under pitiless feet, masticating snakes of evil, loaded with jewels, necklaces of skulls and freshly cut off heads, guarded by huge-mouthed monsters and the eight Dread Ones, surrounded by an impressive array of tangible prayer-wheels, realistic representations of Heaven and Hell, mystifying exorcisms, gorgeous vestments, bells, drums, banners, silver-mounted cups made of human skulls, those were Gods in whose power hunters of men and beasts could honestly believe.

And since in addition to this initial advantage Tibetan Lamaism was particularly fortunate in the men representing it at Karakorum, its triumph was assured. The first of these representatives was the old and famous Abbot of the Ssa Sskja Monastery, the most powerful in Southern Tibet. It so happened that Prince Godan, a son of Ogotai's, fell ill of a grievous sickness which the shamans failed to cure. He appealed for help to the Abbot, who notwithstanding his advanced age,



undertook the long and arduous journey, as Ch'ang Ch'un had done before him.

Like Ch'ang Ch'un, he travelled more or less constantly for three whole years, but whereas the Chinese Taoist was a real saint, the Tibetan Lama was merely a wideawake priest. He contrived to secure the credit of the prince's recovery to the efficacy of his prayers, a feat which enormously enhanced the prestige of his religion, that of its rivals going down in proportion. Mangu declared it the greatest of all the cults seeking his patronage, not because he had studied any of them, but because his favourite adviser happened to be a Tantric Buddhist monk.

Similarly, his brother and successor Kublai Khan fell under the influence of the brilliant nephew, whom the Abbot had brought with him from Tibet when he was only fifteen.

The Abbot himself died at the Mongol Court, but not without seeing to it that whatever power he had obtained there, fell into the nephew's hands. With such a start the ambitious youth soon became an even greater ecclesiastical light, a stronger pillar of Lamaism than his venerable uncle had been.

At nineteen he succeeded him as Head of the Ssa Sskja Monastery, and in the course of a brilliant career earned the titles of "Prince of the Great and precious dogma," "Most Venerable Lama, King of the Doctrine in the three Countries," shortened into "Pa-Ssü-pa," under which name he is generally known.

He was also awarded the honour of being called Kuo Shu, "State Preceptor," the most important of all his honours, for it gave him authority over all Buddhists throughout the great Khan's Empire and became the starting-point of that influx of Tibetan lamas into China which enabled them to grow rich at the expense of the entire laity and of the clergy of other denominations as well.

Among these they singled out the Taoists as the objects of their particular aversion, possibly on account of their claims to practically applicable supernatural powers, which threatened to throw their own sorceries into the shade. The Lama-ridden Mangu consequently frowned on Taoists, and Kublai Khan, going still further, ordered all their books of magic to be burnt. Otherwise he followed his grandfather Jenghis Khan's example of tolerance towards every form of worship, provided the worshippers accepted the Mongol thesis that as there is only one Supreme Ruler of Heaven in spite of the variety of ways of adoring Him, so there can only be one Khan on earth in spite of the multiplicity of princes and principalities.

It was this belief in the sanctity and necessity of Mongol

overlordship, hardened by forty years of conquest into a dogma fanatically believed in by the people whose vanity it flattered, that made peace between the Great Khan and the Son of Heaven impossible. Not that the latter put forward any unreasonable pretensions—the southern Sung were much too meek for that—but the mere fact of his existence cast the shadow of doubt on the legitimacy of the resplendent claims of the Great Khan.

Further, the wealth of the Sung Emperor's peaceful hard-working subjects tempted the Mongols, who believed they could obtain a larger share of it by direct taxation than by the indirect method of tribute.

So they chased the Sung into exile and death. But subsequent events proved that by stretching beyond the Yangtze on to the shores of the Indian Ocean they exceeded the limits set by their inner powers of growth. The dynasty they founded in northern China would probably have attained the duration vouchsafed to the Toba Weis or the Khitan Liaos if it had not overreached itself by engulfing more than it could conveniently control.

However, far-sighted counsels of restraint and moderation were taboo at Karakorum, could indeed not be expected from those hefty Khans and generals clattering in flashing armour, on high-mettled horses to the great Kuriltai, their ever victorious banners flapping in the sharp wind of their native steppes, their tents crammed with the costliest treasures of rifled bazaars and palaces, their wives vying with each other as to who should wear the biggest pearl tassels, their war-seasoned troops fretting to be off again on the red trail of more fighting and more loot.

That at the Kuriltai of 1251 these men decided to transfer the Great Khanate from Ogotai's line to that of his brother Tuli, may well have been due to the lack of keenness the former had shown in the pursuit of the mighty ancestor's career of conquest.

It is certainly noteworthy that Mangu's accession coincides with a recrudescence of Mongol aggressiveness on a very large scale. Kuyak had been a small, silent, reserved man, too sickly, too fond of his harem to be really interested in warlike exploits. He failed to push the subjugation either of Syria or of China with the energy the Mongols had been taught to expect. The spirit of Jenghis Khan was growing restless.

In his grandsons Mangu, Kublai and Hulagu he almost came to life again, with this difference, that Kublai was far humaner, Mangu meaner, Hulagu less able than he. Having



drowned Kuyak's inconvenient widow Ogulganish, Mangu proceeded to provide Mongol war-fever with adequate outlets.

He sent Hulagu against Bagdad and beyond, Kublai south against Yunnan and Tibet.

Yunnan was then the small kingdom of Ta Li, independent of the Sung, but of value as opening the way both to their Empire and to Further India. In three years' campaigning its independence as well as that of the wild aborigines roaming in its mountains was annihilated.

Whereupon Wu Liang ho tai, one of Kublai Khan's best generals, invaded Tongking, drove its king to seek refuge on a small ocean island, massacred the luckless inhabitants of the capital and extorted a promise of tribute payable every year.

The more accessible districts of Tibet were also invaded and "sorely ravaged," as Marco Polo writes, adding, "There are indeed towns, villages and hamlets but all harried and destroyed. . . ." "Wild beasts have so greatly multiplied since the devastation of the country, it cannot be reoccupied—barely even travelled through."

But the leading Lama hastened to offer submission and peace, which the Mongols, sizing up the height of the Tibetan mountains, their comparative poverty and the uncanny powers wielded by Lama Gods and abbots, accepted the more readily, as their real objective was not Tibet, but the riches of the Sung.

Strong fortresses protected these from the North, a fleet of war-junks from the East. Therefore Mangu decided on an attack from the West, and with this end in view, himself marched into Szechuan in 1258. But Szechuan bared its teeth at him, and though much ground was seized by his troops, dysentery broke out and decimated them.

Mangu himself succumbed to it, or was mortally wounded by an arrow while blockading Ho chou. The accounts vary, but agree in stating that his great campaign for the conquest of Southern China turned into a gigantic funeral procession bearing his encoffined body on the backs of two donkeys home to his last great White Tent pitched close to the graves of his predecessors in a lone northern valley near the river Kerulen.

The death of the Supreme Khan was always a world-stirring event, and of the utmost importance to all the lesser Khans, for the succession was a matter hanging doubtfully between election and heredity without much regard to primogeniture. None of Mangu's sons were considered possible candidates and from the first the choice seems to have lain between his three brothers, Hulagu, the conqueror of Bagdad, Kublai, the highly popular general of the armies engaged on war

with the Sung, and Arikbuga, whom Mangu had left in charge at Karakorum.

In his quality of regent he summoned the Kuriltai necessitated by Mangu's death, working hard to obtain a majority of votes in support of his claim. Hulagu was too deeply engaged conquering and consolidating what grew into the Empire of the Ilkhans in the West to trouble much about affairs in the East ; the very ones whose control Kublai was determined to obtain.

He was in the midst of his campaign against the Sung in the territory they still possessed north of the Yangtze, when the summons to the great Kuriltai reached him. With it came the news of the many chances in Arikbuga's favour. Bad news for the ambitious Kublai, good news for the Sung. He realized that without his presence at Karakorum at the head of all his forces, the election to the Great Khanate would go against him.

Therefore he struck a bargain with the Sung commander-in-chief, Chia Ssü-t'ao, and accepted the peace the latter had repeatedly offered, but which hitherto had always been scorned. Nor was the bargain a bad one. The Sung Emperor, or rather his representative, agreed to withdraw China's northern boundary to the Yangtze, to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Mongols and to pay them an annual tribute of 200,000 ounces of silver and an equal amount of rolls of silk. On these conditions Kublai hastened north.

But Chia Ssü-tao was sufficiently well informed to know he would have done so anyhow, and over-estimating the gravity of the quarrels which did arise in Karakorum, fancied he could safely repudiate the onerous treaty. A straggling detachment of Kublai's rear-guard was attacked and slain, a dishonourable proceeding which the foxy Chia Ssü-tao represented to his deluded master Li Tsung as a splendid victory, that had driven the Mongols out of the country.

Li Tsung, as well as his successor Tu Tsung, trusted this worthless minister implicitly. For this they have been greatly blamed. But themselves, refined gentle beings wishing harm to no one, it really was hard for them to escape the illusion that everything was arranged for the best in the best and loveliest of worlds. Popular with the citizens, whom they always assisted generously in any case of distress, served with blind loyalty by their officials grown old in the service of the Sung, happy with their accomplished wives, dutiful children, and artist friends, the world in which they were born and bred, the only world they really knew, did seem an earthly corner of the Islands of the Blessed.



Did they not wake each day in the wonderful palace of Lin An with its "gold and azure columns," sculptured ceilings, walls "artfully painted with stories of departed monarchs," its whispering groves and rippling lakes, and fragrant gardens spreading around the Phoenix Hills, the Cliff of the Bright Moon, the Plum Blossom Pavilion, the Rock climbing Grottoes between the western Gate of Crystal Waves, the eastern Gate of Flowers, the southern Gate of Loveliness, the sea-cooled, sun-warmed breeze drifting through silk curtains, circling over lofty pine trees, lingering on beds of peonies and banks of lilac and azalea. Surely the Mongols had conquered enough and, fully employed dividing up their masses of plunder amongst themselves, would leave the Sung in peace.

Chia Ssü-tao, anxious to keep his humiliating promise of tribute dark, encouraged this optimism and for a few years appearances were actually in his favour.

The unity of the Mongol Empire, which had made it so formidable, seemed to be breaking up into four separate and by no means friendly Khanates.

In the North-west that of Kiptchak or the Golden Horde, founded by Batu on the vast plains between the Ural and the Lower Danube ; in the South-west that of the Ilkhans of Persia, erected by Hulagu on the ruins of the Sultanates of Chovaresm and Bagdad between the Indus and the Tigris ; in the centre, astride the ancient trade-routes, through the Tarim Basin, that of Jenghis Khan's son Chagatai and his descendants, their capital at Samarkand ; in the East, the old home of the Mongols and therefore the seat of the Great Khanate, enlarged by the whole of the former Nü-Chên empire, its capital in the newly shot up city of Karakorum.

This state was one half Mongolian nomad prairie land, the other half Chinese sedentary highly cultivated village and city land. Arikbuga's sympathies lay with the first, Kublai's with the latter. But the Chinese being of course wholly unrepresented on the Kuriltai, the chances were, its decision would go against Kublai. Consequently in the swift masterful way he had inherited from his grandfather, he halted on his march north at Kai ping, and there got himself duly elected Great Khan, not by a Kuriltai, but by his own officers.

Then he sped on to Karakorum, where the Mongol princes and nobles with whom alone the right of election really rested, were preparing over many cups of kumiss to make Arikbuga their Great Khan. The storm created among them by Kublai's high-handed forestalling of their plans, amounting up to a serious curtailing of their ancient privileges, took four years to

subside. Years of real fighting with two sanguinary battles on the edge of the desert between the Mongols of Arikbuga and those of Kublai.

The latter won. Arikbuga gave up his claims and submitted to his brother, who forgave him, but not before having reduced him to harmlessness by killing his strongest supporters.

Outwardly peace was restored among the sons of the steppe, inwardly resentment smouldered on, fanned by Kaidu, a grandson of Ogotai, whose pasture and hunting grounds radiated far and wide from the shores of Lake Baikal.

A restless fighter, he saw in Kublai's unpopularity among the Mongol princes the opportunity for righting the wrong that had been done him when Tuli's line ousted his. All his life he was able to cause Kublai a great deal of annoyance in the North, for his cousins and south-western neighbours, the descendants of Chagatai, generally favoured him.

So did Silik, a son of Mangu's and Nayan, a great-great-grandson of one of Jenghis Khan's brothers.

Nayan camped along the Amur and carried a cross on his banner, probably the figureless Nestorian cross. Under his leadership, revolt broke out openly in 1287, raging with the fierceness of a prairie fire almost impossible to quench. Kublai, thoroughly alarmed, took the course that had grown very unusual with him, of commanding his troops in person. His magnetic presence won the day, and the campaign triumphantly ended, everybody was rewarded according to their deserts, as judged from the victors' view-point.

Nayan, the defeated, was tossed to death, tightly wrapped in a carpet, by way of getting over the prohibition against shedding the blood of princes of the Khan's family. The officers who had distinguished themselves on the winning side received promotion and "fine silver plate, splendid jewels of gold, pearls and precious stones in astonishing amounts." But Kaidu was still unbeaten, probably could not be beaten with the vastness of the Siberian plains behind him, into which he could always retire, or from which he could always draw fresh nomad fighting power.

Peace was only re-established on that frontier by Kublai's successor, whose election to the Khanate took place without friction according to custom by a properly convoked and consulted Kuriltai.

Nevertheless, his authority over the distant parts of Jenghis Khan's Empire never equalled even that still exercised by Mangu, and though invisible on the surface, except for a renewed ebullition from Central Asia into India in the latter



half of the fourteenth century, ebb-tide was irrevocably beginning to creep in all along the borders of Mongol expansion.

It may have been due to Kaidu's unfriendly vicinity that Kublai took a dislike to Karakorum and transferred his chief capital south of the Wall to what is now Peking ; it received the name of Khanbaligh, the city of the Khan, or Ta Tu, the Great Court. Of Kai ping on the southern Mongolian highlands, watered by the Luan Ho, beyond the Wall, but many days' journey away from the perilous Karakorum, he made his summer residence Shang Tu, the Upper Court.

Another consequence of all these snarlings of the untamed steppe was, that they blocked territorial expansion and free intercourse West, North and North-east, practically compelling Kublai Khan to seek these in the South.

Expansion was still a political necessity both for the sake of supplying an outlet for the fighting energies of the young bloods of Mongolia, and for acquiring the masses of gold and silver needed to satisfy his luxurious tastes and to make sure of the loyalty of his nobles. These on all great festivals expected gifts of " robes of silk and beaten gold decked with pearls and precious stones," " girdles of gold of great richness and value and a pair of boots of camel leather wrought with silver threads." As, according to Marco Polo, there were 12,000 barons entitled to this superb outfit, it is easy to see that the expense involved could only be met if its burden was shifted on to the bent backs of an industrious and thoroughly subjugated people.

But the Sung statesmen, unaware of these obscurely working causes, all along fondly hoped that, at the very worst, by calling the Great Khan Uncle and feeding his greed with ample tribute, they could purchase his goodwill and keep his hordes out of their territory.

Under Li Tsung's enlightened rule the wealth of the country had increased so much, it was not a vain illusion to think enough could be raised to buy off Mongol aggression. Kublai himself strongly inclined to some such settlement. But the war-party, inevitably the dominant one in a state newly hammered together by the battle-axe, overbore his sounder judgment, and his fire-eating generals got their wish for mad war to a finish.

Li Tsung had the good fortune to die before it broke out. But his son Tu Tsung already felt the ground shaking and threatening to give way beneath him, for he lived to see the fall of Hsiang Yang and Fan Ch'êng, the two fortresses which for five years, ever since 1268, had held up the Mongols, and might

even have succeeded in tiring them out, if Western cunning had not come to the aid of Mongol muscle. At the suggestion of an Uighur general some diabolical siege machines, mangonels, invented in Persia, were set up against those hard unyielding walls. They belched enormous stones at them, stones weighing 166 pounds. With terrific noise they crashed through everything, roofs, towers, bridges, battlements. The havoc was so great, repairs could not keep pace with it.

In March, 1273, its garrison worn out, its crumbling walls scaled, Fan Ch'êng succumbed, fighting bitterly to the last. The commander, Niu Fu, still felled a number of Mongols before dashing his head against a pillar and leaping into the flames of the burning houses. Hsiang Yang, starved and cowed, surrendered voluntarily. Its commander, Lü Wen-huan, evidently a very different type from Niu Fu, actually took service with the Mongols against his former masters. The salve he applied to his conscience for such contemptible disloyalty was the intense and widespread dissatisfaction with a government controlled by so incompetent a minister as Chia Ssü-tao.

It seemed suicidal to serve a monarch weakly led by such a creature, especially since a strong impressive Emperor had arisen in northern China, a real Son of Heaven, who rewarded his generals not with suspicion and neglect but with golden robes and girdles and good appointments.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### KUBLAI KHAN AND HIS SUCCESSORS

**F**OR while the siege of the two fortresses was still in progress, in 1271, Kublai had taken the important step of establishing a dynasty on the Chinese model, reviving the name Yüan once adopted by the Wei Tobas at a similar turning-point of their history. Jenghis Khan was given the title of T'ai Tsu the Supreme Founder ; an ancestral temple was built in Khanbaligh in correct Chinese style to enshrine his tablet and those of his successors. It is true the annual commemorative service there was celebrated by Lamas chanting for seven days and seven nights, but this departure from orthodoxy was fully compensated by the introduction at all important sacrifices of the old Chinese ritual with its solemn music, its beautiful vessels, its dignified robes, in place of the blood smearings and howlings of the Mongol shamans. Also temples to K'ung Fu Tzū were erected in all larger cities, and Chinese scholars employed in subordinate yet none the less influential posts in the administration.

Besides, Kublai had a reputation for generosity and kindness and was not disliked by his Chinese subjects, who though kept well in hand by a mass of exactions and prohibitions, were otherwise allowed to lead their own lives their own way.

If he spent lavishly on his palaces and hunting trips, he also gave a great deal to the poor. Taoists and Buddhist monks, a numerous and influential group, were exempt from taxes and expected and obtained much from his rich and credulous Court. Traders and money-lenders also looked for a high rate of pickings and profits out of the convulsion caused by the Mongol reshaping of the map of Asia and Eastern Europe.

It was the great weakness of the Sung defence that their largest cities on or near the coast contained numbers of foreign merchants—Arabs, Persians, Indians, Jews, wealthy people whose extensive purchase of the olive-green, lavender-blue Lung Chao porcelain and bales upon bales of silks provided a living for thousands of skilled Chinese artisans, but to whom it was a

matter of profound indifference whether these were governed by a Sung or a Yüan Emperor. All they cared about was that the disturbance to trade caused by the Mongol-Chinese war should be kept within tolerable limits and brought to an end as soon as possible.

What sympathies they had, inclined towards the Mongols, whose extensive empire offered greater opportunities for trade together with less or even no rivalry, since the Mongols, unlike the Chinese, scorned having anything to do with commerce except growing fat and lazy on the dues their mailed fists could squeeze out of it.

The Sung capital, Lin An, with its thriving industries, excellent shipping facilities and close connexion with the seaport Khanfu and its "vast amount of shipping," was more a commercial city than a capital. Consequently it found heroism an unbearable strain and its rich, internationally coloured merchant class probably was at the back of Chia Ssü-tao and his emasculated peace policy, regardless of its unpopularity with the patriotic sections of the people.

The rift between these and the advocates of surrender was torn into a yawning chasm by Lü Wên-huan's defection, sadly weakening the former. If a soldier of his calibre, who for five years had valiantly upheld the cause of the Sung, now gave it up as lost, how could lesser men expect to save it? It may have been this crushing thought that sent Tu Tsung to an early grave.

He died in the seventh moon of 1274, only thirty-five years old, and as a crowning misfortune left no grown-up sons to stiffen resistance.

His second son, Chao Hsien, a child of four, was put upon the throne, and became the Emperor Kung Tsung; his grandmother, Li Tsung's widow, the Dowager-Empress Hsie, acted as Regent, with Chia Ssü-tao more powerful than ever.

About the same time the energetic Bayan, the noble, the hundred-eyed who had won his spurs in the West under Hulagu, took over the command of the Mongol forces.

Disaster now sped forward on winged feet.

Before the year was out the breadth of the Yangtze, the great barrier on which the safety of Lin An depended, was dominated by fleets in Kublai's service and by the Persian mangonels, which had battered down Fan Ch'êng. What was worse, one of these proud well-equipped flotillas was led by Lü Wên-huan, thus conspicuously honoured and trusted by his new master. Evidently it paid to go over betimes to the Mongol side.





YÜAN SHIH TSU (KUBLAI KHAN) (1214-1294 A.D.)



YÜAN EMPRESS SHIH TSU (KUBLAI KHAN)





And when the 2,500 Sung war-junks under Chia Ssü-tao's incompetent command were stoned into uselessness and panic by the Persian mangonels, supporting combined attacks by Bayan's fleet and army, Lü Wên-huan's example became irresistible.

The patriots did indeed still obtain Chia Ssü-tao's degradation. An embittered officer went so far as to murder him. Uselessly. Governor after governor forsook the paling star of the Sung and bowed before the dazzling Mongol sunrise.

One city, Ch'ang Chou, however, dared resist. Bayan seized the suburbs and forced the inhabitants to work for him. Bad workers were buried alive or roasted and their fat used for greasing the siege machines.

These soon annihilated resistance. The town was taken, and its population of one million innocent souls massacred.

In another town, Chen Chao, some Alans, a Christianized tribe torn by Mongol conquests from its north Caucasian home, were murdered. They had occupied the city in Kublai's name, but as Marco Polo relates, "lighted on good wine which they lapped up till they were drunk and lay down and slept like so many swine." Of which edifying condition the citizens, not unnaturally, took advantage and "slew them all."

Unluckily Bayan was near and strong. Of the citizens, too, not a single man escaped. Somewhat later, when the war zone had rolled further South, Hsiang Hua suffered the same dread fate. The slaughter was so enormous one could hear the "murmur of rivers of blood."

But these butcheries were partly a sudden relapse into bad old habits, partly a means deliberately chosen for accelerating the pacification of the country by making such a demonstration of the crushing power of the invaders, all thought of resistance would die down in fear. They did not at all correspond with Kublai's actual wishes.

He realized his economic dependence on the productive capacity of southern China far too well to think of committing the folly of killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. His orders were to be sparing of bloodshed and lenient to all who surrendered voluntarily.

Therefore in the very first moon of 1276 the Regent Dowager-Empress chose the least heroic, but under the circumstances also the least disastrous course—submission. She sent the great seal of the Sung to Bayan, whose troops were advancing on the capital in three columns, proud, victorious troops, to whom the poor woman had nothing adequate to oppose, though there still were a few officers like Wên T'ien-hsiang, Lu Hsiu-fu,

Chang Shih-chieh to whom loyalty was a faith that made hardships and death preferable to a life of ease under an alien potentate. To them she entrusted the little Emperor's two brothers, and while the road south was still open sent them to the comparative safety of Wen Chou.

No doubt she hoped that just as once before, when the wild Nü-Chêns hammered at the gates of the capital and dragged the reigning Emperor away, the dynasty was nevertheless saved by a younger prince and re-established in the lovely haven of Lin An, so now again some southern estuary, some verdant island might be found, where the Sung could maintain themselves, till the power of the Mongols crumbled, even as that of the Nü-Chêns had passed away. The light of this possibility made the bitterness of the surrender a little less agonizing.

Nevertheless, she fell ill and was perhaps on that account allowed to remain a few months longer in the beautiful, golden pillared Palace, hers no longer, but Kublai Khan's.

Bayan made his entry into the capital the third moon. However, he did not stay long and declined to see the Imperial family. He had already appointed a joint commission of Mongol and Chinese officials to liquidate the difficult matter of the transfer of authority and to take charge of all public records and buildings. This commission was evidently friendly to the rich merchants, otherwise the city could not have preserved that aspect of old-established wealth and general prosperity which impressed Marco Polo so much when he visited it about ten years later. Only the Imperial Palace showed traces of decay, and even those were due to neglect rather than to deliberate destruction, and did not affect the principal buildings maintained in their former state by the Mongol viceroy whose residence they had become. It was the apartments of Tu Tsung's 1,000 concubines which "were dropping to pieces and could just only still be traced. The wall enclosing the groves and gardens had also fallen down; neither the choice trees nor the rare animals of old remaining." In the spring of 1276 Tu Tsung's poor little son looked on his ancestral home for the last time. Bayan sent him, his mother, grandmother and all the Sung princes he could round up, as the show-pieces of his triumph, to Kublai Khan in his new and sumptuous palace at Khanbaligh.

The exiles were given an honourable reception, the child-Emperor being allowed the title of Duke, and Kublai's chief wife, the Empress Jamui, taking care of them. She was a warm-hearted woman. At sight of the Imperial jewels brought from the Sung to the Yüan palace she wept, saying:



“ So also some day shall it be with our greatness.”

This spirit of humility joined to a thorough enjoyment of greatness while it lasted, produced too much generous happiness at the Yüan Court for any mean vindictiveness to add gratuitously to the grief of the defeated.

But in 1288, when Kung Tsung passed out of childhood, it was felt he must be removed from all possibility of becoming a rallying-point for aspirations to national independence.

Therefore he and his mother were sent to Tibet into the safe and kindly custody of the Lamas. Both gave up a world in which they no longer had a real place, and sought peace and comfort in the service of the Enlightened One who had found the eightfold path leading out of sorrow.

The fate of Kung Tsung's two brothers was far more tragic.

In June, 1286, the eldest, Chao Shih, was proclaimed Emperor at Fu Chou, further south than his first place of refuge, but still not far south enough.

His two years' reign was really only one long flight before the ubiquitous Mongol ships and armies. The terror of their name reached so far, coastal cities, that had never seen a Mongol soldier, were afraid to give shelter to their own Emperor. Besides, rich trading communities like those of Canton all along thought they might find submission to the Mongol with their world-wide connexions more profitable than the continuance of a struggle for what at best would be a most precarious independence. Nevertheless for a few months, thanks to their enemies' attention being directed elsewhere, Sung forces under Wên T'ien-hsiang, Lu Hsiu-fu and Chang Shih-chieh gained ground or rather ceased to lose any.

Once more the hope flamed up of maintaining a Sung state in the extreme south of China, till fresh Mongol troops pouring in from the south-west, which they had conquered before, stamped hope out for ever.

The little Emperor had to seek safety on the sea. But even that turned traitor.

Struck by a typhoon, he was almost shipwrecked, and never recovered from the hardships and terrors he went through. On a rocky island near that unfriendly coast he laid down his weary little body and gave up the uneven fight.

Many of his adherents now wished to do the same, but as there was still one of Tu Tsung's sons left, Prince Chao Ping, Lu Hsiu-fu persuaded them to declare him Emperor and postpone for a brief respite the dreadful day of the extinction of the Sung.

Chao Ping was only nine. The loyalists knew his shoulders were too slender, his hands too weak to carry the burden of 320

years of glory safely through those dark and perilous times. Yet they called him Sovereign Lord and Son of Heaven—mere madness, but a splendid madness, not even a forlorn hope, a final cry of defiance, a supreme gesture of despair.

They erected a wooden structure on the summit of an island, the last pretence of a palace ever built for a Sung Emperor. In the harbour their fleet, still numbering hundreds of war-junks, could ride at anchor and keep communication open with the mainland.

But their remaining land force crumpled up completely before renewed Mongol onslaughts, and Wên T'ien-hsiang was taken prisoner.

Now nothing was left to prevent Mongol overweight from closing down for good on the small pale child clinging desperately to all that was left him of his great ancestral empire, a few arid, sea-washed rocks.

Harassed from all sides, short of food, water, strength, hope, Ti Ping was put on board the biggest war-junk and an effort made to break the blockade under cover of a fog. Chang Shih-chieh with sixteen of the swiftest boats succeeded. The heavier Imperial ship failed. Lu Hsiu-fu, seeing all was lost, bade his wife and children throw themselves overboard and himself took the little Emperor in his arms and jumped into the sea.

Thus the fiery star of the Sung was extinguished in the waves.

Chang Shih-chieh, on hearing this black news, implored Ti Ping's mother to name another Emperor among what was left of Sung princes. But she refused. Her child was dead. What did empires matter? And she also jumped into the sea that she at least might share his grave.

Then Chang Shih-chieh set sail south-westward. A storm threatening on the horizon, he climbed into the highest part of the ship, waved burning incense sticks towards the angry Heaven and cried:

"If the Sung are to revive, save me that I may still serve them. But if they are to perish I have already lived too long."

The hurricane broke up his fleet, engulfed his vessel, and he, too, was lost and drowned. Hundreds of corpses covered the sea.

The Sung dynasty was nothing now but a twilight memory. Yet to some stalwart souls even this demanded their unflinching loyalty. Kublai Khan, aware he could not get enough able men to administer so great and new an empire as his, tried hard to win Wên T'ien-hsiang's allegiance. He failed. There was that within him which "disaster could not steal away," and which



made him prefer a "dungeon lit by the will-o'-the-wisp, uncheered by any breath of spring" to the splendours of the Mongol Court.

Finally, some madman having made an ill-timed and consequently abortive attempt at a Sung restoration, Wên T'ien-hsiang was condemned to death.

Arrived at the place of execution he bowed towards the South where the Sung capital had been, and calmly met his doom.

Some patriots, like the brilliant artist Ch'ien Hsüan, became wanderers on the face of the earth that had been stolen from them. Away from the crowded roads along which the Great Khan's messengers sped and his armies marched, they would find shelter in some wood-cutters' hamlet, some Buddhist or Taoist sanctuary peaceful in lonely mountain valley, remote on pine-crowned mountain-top. There they would pore over the records of their ancestors' great deeds and thoughts, paint the grandeur of their native country's rocks and torrents and white clouds, and unobserved by Mongol eyes, unheard by Mongol ears, sing the "Autumn dirge" of Ou Yang Hsiu, the "Westward flying Cranes" of Su Tung-po to the silver chords of the piba or the lute,

The milestone of the Sung Dynasty was a shattered ruin in the dust, its achievements a quickening impulse for all time.

Others, though as completely in the ban of the loveliness of Sung culture, yet felt they could serve it best by also serving the new and alien but politically paramount Yüan Dynasty

The most famous of these renegades, as the irreconcilable thought them, the sensible men as they proved to be, was Chao Mêng-fu, known far and wide as an inimitable artist in painting and calligraphy. Although a lineal descendant of the founder of the Sung Dynasty, he did not refuse to come to the Court of the Yüans, when Kublai, probably in despair at the tangle to which his collection of ignorant Mongols, shifty Uighurs, corrupt Saracens and rapacious Europeans had reduced the administration, summoned distinguished Sung officials to his aid.

He won favour at once, the Great Khan actually giving him "a seat above that of the Chancellor." As a Cabinet minister, and finally as Secretary of the Hanlin Academy and confidential adviser he served five Yüan Emperors loyally and efficiently, playing much the same part in the palace of Khanbaligh as Yeh-lü Chu-ts'ai had played in the tent residences of Jenghis Khan and Ogotai.

But owing to the marked decrease in Mongol simplicity and corresponding increase in Court jealousies and intrigues, Chao

Mêng-fu's influence on the course of affairs remained considerably smaller.

However, he did what he could to tame his wild masters. Thus, for instance, he succeeded in stopping the barbarous rule according to which any minister arriving late for a Cabinet sitting was flogged like a naughty schoolboy. He also instilled a taste and a regard for Chinese art into his patrons. When they saw how beautifully he painted their horses, they forgave him his dreamy landscapes and allowed him to give orders and appointments to other Chinese artists.

Further, he put elegance of form and diction into their chancelleries, rescuing their proclamations from the dog Chinese which prevailed at that Court, where a dozen languages had to be murdered to be made intelligible to the rulers.

Kublai Khan had some other distinguished Chinese in his service, notably the learned Hsü Hêng, to whom he confided the thorny task of turning the sons of the Mongol nobles into Chinese gentlemen. To this end he put him in charge of the Imperial College already established by Ogotai on Yeh-lü Chuts'ai's advice. There from the first streak of dawn Hsü Hêng in the sweat of his brow tried to put Sung polish on the uncouth louts to whom books and refinements seemed ridiculous trash compared to hunting and drinking.

Nor were the results at all commensurate with the pains he took. Kublai's Mongols, young and old, remained barbarians to the end.

Duke K'ung Chu, lineal descendant of the great Sage, whom Kublai tried to retain at his Court, felt utterly lost amidst its garish splendour and declined to become one of the mob of astrologers, soothsayers, monks, priests, mullahs, friars, rabbis who lived on the Khan's bounty and prayed with genuine fervour for endless prolongation of a life so necessary to their own well-being.

The Duke asked to be allowed to return to the quiet halls, the sacred silence around the simple tomb of his ancestor who had not taught men how to cringe before the mighty. And Kublai on his side, probably finding this reserved, dignified scholar insufferably dull, let him go.

No doubt it was good policy to tell the people human happiness was wholly a matter of moral worth, as these high principled Confucians insisted on doing. His Tibetan Pa-Ssü-pa's eloquence with his clamorous objurgations to terrific divinities compelling them to give the suppliant the best of luck was both less irksome and more convincing. When he decided to endow the Mongols with a script of their own, finding the Uighur one



hitherto in use insufficient, he turned, not to Chinese scholars, but to the Tibetan Lama.

Within a year this obliging ecclesiastic produced a script of forty-one characters capable of rendering over a thousand Mongol words with sufficient precision. Kublai was delighted, gave its inventor the title of Prince of the Great and Precious Law and in 1269 made it the sole official writing—at least in theory.

In practice in his Chinese dominions decrees and inscriptions had to be at least bilingual.

During the next two reigns fifty-six new characters were added, of course also by one of the high dignitaries of a Tibetan Lamassery. They did not prefer the peace of lonely valleys to the golden opportunities of acquiring wealth and power offered by the noisy Mongol Court.

Just as the Germanic invaders of the Roman Empire fell spiritually under the tutelage not of the true bearers of the old Mediterranean culture, the Græco-Roman philosophers, but of a powerful hierarchy of bigoted priests, so the conquering Mongols dropped down on their knees before the incantations of Tibetan Lamas and into heavy slumber at the lectures of the real bearers of Eastern Asiatic civilization, the Confucian scholars and the monks of the older Buddhism and Taoism.

With the best will on both sides to reach an understanding, the chasm between the subtle, sensitive Sung intellectuality and coarse-grained Mongol bovinity yawned deep, uncompromising, absolute. Men like Chao Mêng-fu and Hsü Hêng did indeed throw bridges across it, the bridges of art and of ethics, over which some of the spiritual values of the conquered were carried into the consciousness of the conquerors. Enough interest was aroused to make the latter apply the superb proportions and colours of Chinese architecture unaltered to the building of their palaces and temples ; to preserve the collections of books and pictures captured at Lin An as an ornament of their own capital, highly prized however little understood ; to translate the book of Filial Piety into Mongolian, which translation was recommended by the Great Khan himself with the following prefatory injunction :

“ Let all princes, nobles and people practise the great principles of K'ung Fu Tzŭ. Let them be printed and a copy presented to every nobleman.”

Even earlier, a committee learned in Tibetan, Sanscrit, Uighur, Chinese and Mongolian laboured twenty-one years, from 1285 to 1306, at preparing the Tibetan collection of sutras and the one made under the Chin dynasty, for Mongol readers.

The task was difficult and could only be completed after the Lama church dignitary, called "The Light Beam of the Law," had made some necessary additions to the Mongolian script.

In the domain of art-crafts the Mongols also showed enough appreciation to prevent any loss of technical skill, which even enlarged its sphere to include the various kinds of enamel work in and on metal introduced from Byzantium via Persia.

Nor did efforts towards even greater technical mastery cease in the potteries. Palace orders still went to the Imperial ceramic factory at Ching tê chên and a beautiful blue glaze with purplish crimson flashes is often classified as Yüan porcelain.

But joy in creative work was soon seriously impaired by the rapacious incompetence of Yüan officials placed in control of the management. Also the garish taste of the Mongols, dazzled with a profusion of bright colours and bizarre shapes amassed from every part of their enormous empire, crept insidiously into Chinese workshops, setting up fashions far removed from the elegant purity of the Sung style.

It is true the Mongols did not destroy Chinese culture, occasionally even took definite steps to preserve it, as, for instance, when the Mongol prefect stopped the destruction of the tablets on which the nine classics had been engraved under the T'angs.

Yet neither did they grow one with it and lift it into the sunshine of power as the far better inspired Manchus were to do four centuries later.

Thoughtlessly, stupidly they forced it to lead an undernourished life, deprived of the fresh air of self-government, withered by the blight of alien oppression, bowed under the burden of monstrous exactions. Therefore when with great shouts of triumph and the waving of banners flaunting fifty years of military glory, Jenghis Khan's grandson Kublai Khan set up the Yüan milestone, the road of Chinese history took a terrible plunge away from the radiant heights to which Sung artists, poets, and philosophers had raised it, down into the dark and sunless valleys of slave-labour, bondage, and secretly fermenting passions for rebellion and revenge.

The Yüan dynasty lasted officially from 1271, when it was first proclaimed, to 1368, when its last Emperor fled from Khanbaligh never to return. But it actually ruled over the northern provinces of China 134 years, from the fall of the Nü-Chên Chins in 1234, over the Southern ones only eighty-eight years, from the annihilation of the Sung in 1279.

Including posthumous creations it has eighteen Emperors to its credit, most of them, to be strictly accurate, to its



*discredit.* Only ten were Yüan Emperors in their lifetime and of these a bare four were equal to their magnificent position.

Kublai Khan with his reign of thirty-four years, his genial manner and abundant good humour, stands head and shoulders above all his descendants. To Marco Polo, identifying power with greatness, he even was the most glorious ruler ever seen.

This Venetian traveller came to Kublai's Court in 1275, with his father and uncle, like so many drawn thither by the opportunities of gain, licit and illicit, which the Mongol convulsion had opened up. Kublai, always glad of intelligent foreigners who, far away from their own country and free from all ties in the country they had come to, depended entirely on his favour and could therefore be trusted to serve his interests almost as loyally as their own, received the three Venetians extremely well and seems to have entrusted them with several important government missions. For three years Marco Polo was governor of Yang Chow, or perhaps only superintendent of the Salt Gabelle there, with what benefit to the inhabitants history does not relate.

But when in 1235 the Polos returned to Venice they won the name of millionaires from the quantity of precious stones they brought with them sewn in their clothes. Marco's fame, though, does not rest on these riches, but on his account of what he saw in the far Asiatic world, which in its distance, its vastness and its splendour was so new and so dazzling to European eyes. His admiration for Kublai himself is unbounded and wholeheartedly sincere. He describes him as "shapely, of middle height, with a florid complexion, a well-formed nose and fine black eyes."

His portrait shows a kindly humorous twinkle in these "fine black eyes" which, coupled with his lavish hospitality, explains the excellent impression he made on all foreigners who came to his Court, and his talent for winning able Chinese like Chao Mêng-fu over to his side.

Marco Polo also gives vivid descriptions of the lavish scale on which the whole life of the Court was planned. Of the Palaces, for instance, he writes that the main one in Khanbaligh

"is the greatest that ever was, so vast, so rich, so beautiful no man on earth could design anything superior to it. The Hall is large enough to dine 6,000 people, and it is a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides."

"The walls are all covered with gold and silver and adorned with dragons sculptured and gilt, with beasts, birds, knights, idols, and sundry other subjects."

"Outside the roofs are coloured with vermilion, yellow, green, blue and other hues fixed with a glaze so exquisite they shine like crystal

and lend a resplendent lustre to the Palace as seen for a long way round."

Next he expatiates on the wonderful pleasure grounds, "parks full of choice trees bearing a variety of fruits." Wide spaces "covered with abundant grass" enlivened by

"white stags, fallow deer, gazelles, roebucks, fine squirrels and all manner of other beautiful creatures; a fine Lake containing a foison of fish which the Emperor hath caused to be put there; to the north the Green Hill made by art from the earth dug out of the lake, completely covered with evergreen trees, some no matter how big, carried there bodily with all their roots and the earth attached to them by the Emperor's elephants."

"On the top of the hill there is a fine big Palace, green inside and out; thus the hill, the trees and the palace form together a charming spectacle. And the Great Khan has caused this beautiful prospect to be formed for the comfort, solace, and delectation of his heart"—

a large heart, for on the other side of the lake he built a Palace just like his own "for his eldest son whom he had chosen as his successor"; he allowed each of his four principal wives, his Empresses, "a special Court to herself, very grand and ample"; with no less than 10,000 persons, namely 300 "fair and charming damsels, pages, eunuchs and other attendants of both sexes" attached to each Court.

Then his twenty-two sons by the Empresses and his twenty-five sons by his concubines had to be provided for. Of the first "seven were kings of vast provinces and governed them well"; of the latter all "were good and valiant soldiers, each one a great chief."

Evidently China was treated as the family possession of the Great Khan and both its surplus wealth and the wealth it could not spare went to keeping his own Court, the Courts of his four Empresses and the establishments of his forty-seven sons besides those of powerful ministers and favourite Lamas and other foreign advisers in luxurious comfort.

The presents which it was customary to give him on New Year's Day amounted to an additional burden, for obviously nothing but the very best could be offered, and the correct quantity was nine times nine: "nine times nine splendid white horses richly caparisoned, or nine times nine pieces of gold, or nine times nine rolls of brocade, nine times nine lustrous pearls," and so on.

Of course, the celebration of the day, culminating in a huge banquet and a performance by jugglers, was extravagantly magnificent.

It was called the "White Feast," because white being a



lucky colour with the Mongols, nobody was allowed to wear anything but pure white.

On the other great festival, the Khan's birthday, every one was dressed in gold. The ceremonies began with offerings of incense to Kublai's vermilion name-tablet and humble prostrations before the mighty one himself by all the nobles and the Imperial princes. There followed a procession of "5,000 elephants covered with rich and bright housings and each carrying two splendid coffers filled with the Emperor's gold plate," of which he possessed incredible quantities; for "the wine flavoured with costly spices" was drawn off a huge vessel of pure gold into four smaller ones; and pitchers of finest gold big enough to hold drink for eight or ten persons (thirsty persons, being either Mongols or foreigners drinking at some one else's expense) were placed between every two guests with a couple of golden cups with handles. "The ladies were supplied in the same way."

After the march past of the elephants, came that of the camels, "also covered with gorgeous housings and laden with things needful for the Feast." There were great numbers of them and in their old desert wisdom they probably wondered what all the commotion was really about.

At the feast, the Great Khan sat at the north side of the Hall facing south, his chief wife beside him on the left. His table was elevated a good deal above the others; on his right on a lower level sat all the princes of the Blood; on his left their wives; and on a still lower level the barons and knights and their ladies. This corresponded to the hierarchical social structure of those days and allowed the Sovereign, who was both the central and the topmost figure, to dominate the whole scene.

Further to enhance this impression of irresistible power, which was eagerly expected rather than humbly acquiesced in, "a great Lion was led into the Emperor's presence and as soon as it saw him it lay down before him with every sign of the utmost veneration as if acknowledging him for its lord; and it remained there lying before him entirely unchained."

"Those who waited on the Great Khan with his dishes and his drinks are some of the great Barons. They have mouth and nose muffled with fine napkins of silk and gold, so that no breath nor odour from their persons should taint the dish or the goblet presented to the Lord. And when the Emperor is going to drink, all the musical instruments strike up. And when he takes the cup all the Barons and the rest of the company drop on their knees and make the deepest obeisance before him and then the Emperor drinks. Each time he does so the whole ceremony is repeated."

But the sumptuousness of his Court at Khanbaligh, however astounding, was eclipsed by that of his hunting expeditions.

The principal one lasted three months, from March to May, and took him to what, judging by the abundance of game, must have been wild, uncultivated territory in South-eastern Manchuria. What with 10,000 falconers, 20,000 huntsmen, one-half in red, the other in blue livery, in charge of hundreds of packs of mastiffs, moving along on a line, "one pack tearing after a bear, another after a stag, running the game down now on this side and now on that"; 500 gerfalcons, peregrines, sakers kept in readiness to strike down cranes and water-fowl, besides leopards, tigers and eagles trained to attack boars, wild cattle and asses, a serious campaign could not have set more men and animals in motion.

"The Emperor being troubled with gout was carried upon four elephants in a fine chamber lined inside with plates of beaten gold, outside with tiger skins. He keeps beside him a dozen of his choicest gerfalcons. Several of his Barons ride alongside on horseback. Sometimes one shall exclaim: 'Sire, look out for cranes!' Instantly the Emperor has the top of his chamber thrown open and having marked the cranes casts one of his gerfalcons. Often the quarry is struck within his view, so that he has the most exquisite sport and diversion there as he sits in his chamber or lies on his bed. And all the Barons with him get the enjoyment of it likewise."

For three months this savage gloating over blood and slaughter went on. Neither the Emperor nor the "other gentry ever being done with hunting and hawking whilst in the camp there."

This camp of over 10,000 tents pitched in a region "abounding with lakes, rivers, plains and forests, was like a huge city, for besides the entire court one must reckon the leeches, the astrologers, the falconers and all the other attendants on so great a company and add that everybody there has his whole family with him, for such is their custom."

"The Great Khan's two audience tents, of which one was large enough to easily shelter 1,000 souls," and his chamber had ropes of silk "and poles of spicewood covered with tiger skin. Tiger skins also protected the outside of the tents." Inside they were lined with ermine and sable "exquisitely applied and inlaid." The market price "of one robe of sable was 2,000 bezants gold."

During the months of December, January and February there were shorter hunting excursions round the capital.

Besides this, from October to March "the Khan's Court was supplied daily with 1,000 heads of game whether of beasts or



birds, not counting quails"; also with fish in corresponding quantities.

Further immense contributions of furs, hides, silks, rice, fruits, precious woods, stones and metals flowed from the provinces into the Khan's storehouses and treasure-houses, and this in addition to the enormous sums obtained from Southern China. Marco Polo, "who was several times sent by the Great Khan to inspect the amount of his custom and revenue" from the old Sung capital Lin An and its adjacent territory, estimates them from that district alone "at 14 million 700,000 saggi of gold (each saggi being worth more than a gold ducat)," really not an incredible amount, considering that all trade transactions were heavily taxed and that trade at that time was still extremely flourishing.

The salt tax there brought in another 5,600,000 saggi of gold.

Yet, in spite of its abundance, Kublai Khan's income was just only sufficient, for, besides the ordinary expenditure, he had to meet the cost of the many wars he started to keep his army in training.

The annexation of the Sung Empire brought him into direct contact with the states of Further India, Annam, Champa, Burma. They seem to have been perfectly willing to be pleasant neighbours, but it takes a certain amount of mutual forbearance to establish true neighbourliness. Of that the Mongols, like the French of Napoleon, swollen-headed with the pride of victory, bored at the idea there should be an end to loot and conquest, were wholly incapable. The world-Empire bee kept on buzzing in Kublai Khan's bonnet and instigated two campaigns against Champa and Annam, three against Burma, one against Java, two against Japan.

They were enlivened by some looting of capitals, and many fierce battles. One of these, the battle of Yung Chang, a brilliant Mongol victory over the Burmese, has been described by Marco Polo with much crude delight in smashing blows dealt and taken from swords and mace. "The din and uproar were so great, that God might have thundered, and no man would have heard it"—a usual oversight in war-time.

The stampede of the Burmese war-elephants largely contributed to the Mongol triumph. Their capture and subsequent use at the Yüan Court was one of the few concrete benefits of these expeditions and one that could have been acquired far more cheaply by peaceful methods.

Another result was the making and the unmaking of the reputation of generals.

Nasruddin, son of a distinguished Arab of Bokhara, created governor of Yünnan, was among the successful, Kublai's own son Togan among the unsuccessful leaders.

Abandoning his army to extricate itself as best it could from the horrors of poisoned arrows and tropical diseases, he fled and returned to Yan Chow in the Yangtze delta, where his angry father's orders bade him stay, banishing him for ever from the sight of his face.

There also was a certain gain of military experience and of stolen property, but as the experience went to show that Mongol energy had reached the barrier at which its hammering in the end only recoiled upon itself, its value was of the same negative kind as most of the results of these singularly ill-advised campaigns.

The most foolish of all were those directed against Japan—the first of 1274, ending in two disastrous naval defeats for Kublai's forces near Tsushima and Shimonoseki, the second of 1281, carried out on a bigger scale, but ending the same way, a great storm and the disunion of the Yüan commanders coming to the assistance of the Japanese.

A third factor working for them was the utter lack of enthusiasm felt for this war by the bulk of Kublai's sailors. Recruited from the recently conquered Sung Empire, a sullen hatred of their new masters still smouldered in their hearts. The Japanese, no doubt aware of this and anxious to utilize their skill at shipbuilding and navigating, spared 10,000 of them stranded in Japan, together with 30,000 Mongols. To the latter, however, they showed no mercy, killing all but three, to whom they entrusted the unpleasant task of bringing the news of their defeat to the Great Khan.

Shortly afterwards he experienced another disagreeable surprise.

For years Achmed, a Muslim from Turkestan, had been his favourite and most implicitly trusted minister, probably on account of his skill in supplying him with money, the spending of which he enjoyed far too well to inquire very closely as to how it had been obtained.

The people from whom it was extorted thought differently ; many also loathed Achmed for the grievous wrongs he inflicted on them, kidnapping their wives and daughters, causing all he hated or who stood in his way to be imprisoned and executed on entirely false charges.

A group of Chinese led by Wang Chu, angered beyond endurance, conspired to murder him and succeeded in doing so during Kublai's absence from Khanbaligh in Mongolia. He was



at Chagan Nor when the alarming news reached him. He at once dispatched a Polo (possibly Marco Polo, though there also was a Mongol Polo lo at Kublai's Court) to the capital, to start a most searching inquiry.

Wang Chu was of course executed, but he died protesting he had done a meritorious work in ridding the country of such a monster.

Kublai soon came to share this view of the matter. Many accusers arose against the dead minister, and a pretext had to be found to justify the transfer of the Mahommedan's enormous hoard from his to the Imperial residence. Finally, the former favourite was pulled out of his grave, the head exhibited in grim warning to all the other ministers, the body flung to the dogs.

Those of his sons who had followed their father's bad example were flayed alive and other members of his family, besides a crowd of satellites, altogether 714 people, were put to death.

The hand of the Great Khan's justice was not a light one.

Another aftermath of Achmed's dire fall, was an eclipse of the favour hitherto enjoyed by Muslims. They were suddenly forbidden to slaughter animals in the way enjoined by the Koran, which happened to be different from the fashion patronized by Mongol butchers. As this prohibition kept Mahommedan traders away from China and they were the biggest purchasers of Chinese manufactures, Kublai, dependent on ample returns from the customs, soon found it expedient to revert to the tolerance traditional in his family.

Nor could he dispense with Mahommedans in government offices, particularly in those connected with finance. Indeed, though Achmed had been posthumously spectacularly punished for oppressing the people, no real reform took place in that respect.

Even Marco Polo, though so wholeheartedly on the side of the Mongols, has to confess that from time to time Chinese murdered the governors whom the Great Khan placed over them, and loathed the sight of his soldiers garrisoning all their cities, the garrisons being both numerous and strong. The smallest mustered 1,000, the greatest 30,000 men. The cavalry was probably entirely Mongol, but the infantry was also recruited from that mixed Tartar and Chinese population produced by the three and a half centuries of Khitan and Nü-Chên domination in Northern China.

Besides these forces and the expeditionary troops, the Great Khan maintained a bodyguard of 12,000 picked men, principally

Mongols, but with a foreign admixture, sons of vassal princes and hostages. This crack corps divided into four companies of 3,000 took it in turns to watch day and night over his personal safety; surely a necessary precaution, although Marco Polo innocently remarks:

“Not that he kept those for fear of any man whatever, but merely because of his own exalted dignity.”

That dignity, for all the glamour of almost unbroken success, all the sunshine of large-handed hospitality, rested ultimately entirely on physical force, unredeemed by any intellectual, moral or even merely economic superiority. The moment the discipline which Jenghis Khan's genius had drilled into the brains of his Mongols and the hardiness which the icy winds of the steppe kept on blowing into their bones dissolved from prolonged contact with Chinese civilization, of which they only grasped the most dangerous side, its vices and its luxuries, the Yüans were doomed.

Notwithstanding all the good advice men like Yeh-lü Ch'uts'ai and Chao Mêng-fu poured into their ears, they failed to organize the one thing that can hold an artificially created state permanently together, an honest and efficient civil administration.

Kublai, with big-hearted but short-sighted impartiality, filled responsible posts throughout his Empire with Mongols, Uighurs, Arabs, Persians, Tibetans, Europeans, men of the most varied creeds, languages and ideas, alike only in their sublime ignorance of the needs, traditions, language and customs of the people they were called on to govern. Most of them were far more concerned with filling their pockets and keeping in favour with the Great Khan by filling his as well, than of administering such a complicated thing as justice, and promoting the welfare of a population for which they felt no sympathy whatsoever. It is true they enjoyed the assistance of a number of Chinese-born underlings, mediating between ruler and ruled. But among them, too, the unsavoury profiteer type, that toadstool growth of troubled times, tended to predominate.

Already, in 1303, Kublai's successor, Timur, realizing the danger of such a state of things, seized the broom of reform, swept 18,743 corrupt magistrates out of office and reversed 5,176 judgments.

It being found that something constructive was needed as well to secure a supply of tolerably honest officials, the old Chinese system of selection by literary examinations, to be held every three years in the capital, was re-established in 1313 under Ayuli Palpata. Mongols, Northern and Southern



Chinese were admitted as candidates. As the Mongols, though officially favoured, were incapable of rivalling the Chinese in literary matters, and as Westerners were not allowed to compete at all, the system tended to fill the administration with Chinese. That may have been the reason why the fiercely anti-Chinese Po Yen, for a few years the all-powerful minister of the last Yüan Emperor, stopped the examinations. On his fall in 1340 they were resumed, but then the authority of the Yüans was already so shaken, even a first-class civil service could no longer have saved it. And a civil service completely overshadowed by the power of the military, as that of the Mongol horseback Empire always was, could not develop the sense of responsibility and honour which would have held it together in the storm of revolt which smashed the dynasty.

Anything civilian was looked down on and the bulk of the population consequently enjoyed even its oldest established rights only on sufferance. If these were interfered with by the Great Khan's soldiers or messengers and favourites armed with his golden tablets of authority, there was absolutely no redress, although from time to time a benevolent edict went forth from the Dragon Throne prohibiting flagrant abuses.

Thus, in 1286, Timur forbade the Mongol cavalry to turn their horses loose on any field they fancied, and ordered the extremely severe fishing and game laws to be slightly relaxed.

In 1326 Tai Ting Ti warned the Tibetan Lamas and the Imperial couriers against molesting the people.

These couriers were either runners or riders. The latter were entitled to take any horse they met on the road if anything happened to their own. The whole system first organized by Ogotai was an essential factor in the maintenance of the Great Khan's authority, keeping him in touch with the remotest parts of his dominions by transmitting news and orders with the maximum speed attainable in those days. Every twenty-five miles along all the great roads radiating from the capital, horse post-stations "with fine beds and all other necessary articles in rich silk provided the messengers with everything they could want."

"At all larger stations from two to 400 horses stood ready, their total number amounting to 300,000." "They cost the Emperor nothing because they were supplied by the surrounding cities and villages." "Only in uninhabited tracts they were furnished at the Emperor's expense." Express messages went at one streak of almost unbroken galloping, fresh horses and men at every post-station, and in twenty-four hours covered 500 miles.

The men, "highly prized for their endurance, bound their stomach, chest and head with strong bands" and wore a girdle hung with bells "heard jingling a long way off to warn the stations that a fresh mount would" at once be needed.

The Tibetan Lamas, waxing full-bellied and empty-headed on Imperial bounty and Mongol gullibility, started abusing the privileges of this postal service, interfering with its efficiency and oppressing the people. The Emperor T'ai Ting therefore forbade them to use his courier horses—or at any rate issued an edict to that effect.

But his reign was brief; and the Lamas stood for Eternity. Their Head Pontiff was almost as much a holder of the Keys of Heaven and Hell in the China of the Yüans as the Pope of Rome in mediaeval Europe, with an undefined power impossible to control.

Under Kaishan Guluk Khan in 1308, at his own residence of Shang Tu, the Lamas, who thanks to his predecessor's pious generosity swarmed there, had the audacity to give the Prefect a sound thrashing, and the Emperor thought it prudent to let them go unpunished.

When about 1330 the Grand Lama condescended to honour the faithful of Khanbaligh with a visit, princes and ministers fell down before him in the dust and received the most arrogant treatment at his hands.

The Chinese, on the Mongol Emperor's order, had annually to gorge his favourite monks with 439,000 catties of flour, 79,000 of oil, 59,000 of honey and wine.

They nevertheless had not lost the proud heritage of their past, intellectual independence and the contempt for priestly pretensions that goes with it. Their foremost scholar politely compelled the Grand Lama to treat him as an equal, on the ground that the representative of Buddha ranked no higher than a leading disciple of K'ung Tzū.

He was able to do this because almost all the Yüan Emperors, in spite of their predilection for Tibetan Buddhism, realized the political wisdom of honouring the great Chinese Sage at least outwardly and officially. Some also attempted to fulfil the proper functions of a Son of Heaven and resume the Imperial worship of Heaven, interrupted by the destruction of the Sungs. But the attempt remained half-hearted, the religious side of the exalted office they had conquered did not appeal to these Sons of the sword. Fasting, purification and prayer were tiresome things more conveniently done by proxy.

Accordingly they paid thousands of priests, and paid them



well, to flatter the most exacting Gods with the abundance and variety of the worship offered them.

When, in 1285, Kublai Khan lost his favourite son Chên-chin, whom he had chosen as his heir, he employed 40,000 lamas to chant his soul to Paradise. He had been an excellent prince, the sworn enemy of Achmed and his corrupt methods—and deserved to be escorted upwards by such a wealth of harmony.

Nine years later the wintry skies of Northern China were shaken with a yet greater resonance of dirges and wailings—the mighty Kublai Khan had been called away from his wives and his falcons, his golden-walled palaces and ermine-lined tents. He had enjoyed them to the full, being eighty when he was borne away from his beloved capital, not in a radiant palanquin carried by huge elephants, refreshing breezes rustling its curtains of yellow brocade, but in a dark and airless coffin, moving mournfully, slowly to the ancient home mountains, where his forefathers slept in the depths of the soil.

A Kuriltai, assembled at Shang Tu, placed his grandson Timur, the third son of Chên-chin, on the throne, and though it apparently needed some ominous growling on the part of Bayan and his troops to carry the election through, it proved a good one.

Timur did his best to secure a just and honest administration and to liquidate the war resentments left by his grandfather both in the extreme North and the extreme South. But he also had to humour the high spirits of an overfed general and allow him to indulge in a gratuitous attack on some obscure tribes in Yünnan. The crime for which they were to be punished was their refusal to accept the calendar which Kublai Khan's Arab and Chinese astronomers had prepared for him.

However, the Mongols got as much punishment as they gave. Several tribes united, and the malarial climate and difficult country helping, wiped out one of Timur's armies completely, besides destroying several small military posts.

In the end, of course, the weight of organization and armament told against them. The leader was captured and killed. Still from that time the ardour of Mongol generals for southern expeditions remained at zero and whether the native tribes reckoned time by the calculations made at the Khanbaligh Observatory or not, there was peace in Yünnan.

Unfortunately already at forty, Timur began to sicken. At forty-one he experienced the sorrow of seeing his only son die before him. The abounding vitality of Jenghis Khan and Kublai Khan who could drink deep for days, hunt for weeks, satisfy a dozen wives, entertain crowds of foreign ambassadors

and between whiles settle complex military and political affairs in a masterly manner, had not long been able to stand transplantation from the bracing air of a camp of yurts to the confinement of solid walls, all the more pernicious for being richly decorated palace-walls.

In 1307, at the close of the year, the 40,000 Lamas had to intone their mournful chants again and the long sad trail of an Imperial procession again wound its way North to commit Kublai's grandson to oblivion and sleep. He had been a good ruler.

Many eyes were wet with tears. But there were others, sharp and watchful as a hawk's to miss no chance of swooping into the place his death had left vacant. There were rival claims between his cousins and nephews. Bubighan, one of his widows, and his minister Ahuntai worked for the cousin prince Ananta, a grandson of Kublai Khan's, and declared him regent with a view to declaring him Great Khan in due course of time.

Another minister, however, a Saracen, to judge by his name, Alahasun, won by the nephews Kaishan and Ayuli Palpata, started the bells on the girdles of express messengers jingling full tilt to summon these sons of Timur's brother Tala mapala post-haste to the capital. Evidently more quick-witted than his opponents he managed to get them under lock and key.

Kaishan was in command of the North-western army, which may have had something to do with his election to the Great Khanate at the Kuriltai assembled at Shang Tu. He showed his gratitude to his brother Ayuli Palpata who had laboured hard in his interests, by pronouncing him his successor, although he had several sons. His unfortunate rival, on the other hand, experienced his wrath in full measure and was killed with all his helpers, including Timur's widow.

Notwithstanding this red-handed advent to the Dragon Throne, Kaishan favoured Chinese culture, bestowed the title of Supreme Teacher on K'ung Tzū, and recommended the study of his ethics to the Mongol nobility.

Having been a heavy drinker in his youth, the sultry air of the Palace did not agree with him. His spell of power only lasted four years.

At thirty-one he was a dead man.

The singers of funeral dirges were kept in practice.

As agreed beforehand, his brother Ayuli Palpata now took up the burden of government and bore it so well he earned the name of the Benevolent Ancestor, Jen Tsung. He showered favours on both Confucianists and Buddhists. To the latter he donated 3,900 ounces of pure gold for illuminating a collec-



tion of Sutras. Mêng Tzŭ's shade which might have frowned at such lavishness was pacified by being created Duke of Chow.

Then Ayuli Palpata himself became a shadow and his son Sotpala sat in his seat. Not for long.

He was too young to know how to pick his way with the necessary circumspection among the welter of crooked dealings in envy, hatred, favouritism, ambition and greed which made the ground about him so slippery.

A resuscitated Achmed, the minister Timuteer, abused his position for enriching himself and destroying his enemies. He died a natural death in 1322, but accusations swarmed round his grave so threateningly, the Emperor ordered his memorial tablet to be destroyed, his ill-gotten wealth to be confiscated and an inquiry into prevalent abuses in the administration to be opened.

That was too much for Timuteer's adopted son, the chamberlain Ti Shieh. The confiscated property no doubt also rankled in his brain.

Furtively he squinted round for another Emperor.

There was no dearth of Yüan princes from whom to select one. His choice fell on Yesun Timur, probably because he was in command in Mongolia and might be expected neither to know nor to care much about peculations in Khanbaligh. The young Emperor was resting for the night on his way thither from Shang Tu when this reptilian chamberlain crept into his tent and murdered him. He was only twenty-one and left no sons by an Empress.

The commotion caused by this crime must have been very great, but as usual there was a Dowager-Empress to carry on the regency and keep the government going for the successor.

Messengers dashed North as far as the banks of the Kerulen, to bring Yesun Timur the dread news, from his point of view, the good news, though he took care to have the regicide killed. A deputation followed the great seal. On the fourth day of the ninth month in 1323 he was proclaimed Great Khan, Son of Heaven.

His earthly father was Kanmala, son of Chên-chin, son of the Great Kublai Khan. But he had two cousins, Hosila and Tup Timur, who cursed volubly when they saw him mount the throne they coveted for themselves.

They were the sons of Kaishan, son of Dharmabaka, son of Chên-chin. There is quite a Biblical sound about these pedigrees, but the conduct of the men to whom they refer was anything but Biblical, unless one goes back to the days of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Young, self-indulgent, insincere, they lacked that strength of character which enabled their mighty ancestors to impose obedience, loyalty and discipline by their mere presence. These essentials beginning to fail, the succession grew rather hectic, with consequent yet further weakening of the Great Khan's immediate power. Eunuchs, dowagers, ministers, generals, brothers, cousins, uncles took a hand in the game which seldom ended without casualties.

Thus, at Yesun Timur's sudden death in the summer of 1328, after a four years' reign of drought, locusts, famines, earthquakes, his son Achakpa, aged eight, proclaimed Emperor by his widow and adherents, disappeared in the scramble for the throne started by the partisans of Kaishan's two sons, Hosila and Tup Timur. The deceased Emperor, not trusting them, had kept them as far apart as possible, relegating the eldest to northernmost Mongolia, the younger to Nanking. But the governor of Khanbaligh was their friend and intermediary and had the important passes of Ku pei kou and Kiu Yung Kuan garrisoned by troops devoted to them rather than to Achakpa.

Tup Timur was the first to arrive at what was practically a battlefield. There had been fighting and bloodshed. The situation was critical. So he consented to mount the throne at once, but on the understanding that he was only holding it for his elder brother. This sounded so well, that when at Karakorum in February, 1329, Hosila was elected Great Khan, he gratefully appointed Tup Timur his successor.

It seems, though, the latter found it harder to climb down from the throne and stand on the level waiting for it, than he had expected. Towards the end of the summer of the same year the two brothers met at Shang Tu, in the big parks and sumptuous pavilions once bright with Kublai's jovial Court, now haunted by the angry ghosts of Yesun Timur, his murdered son and his murdered predecessor. The air reeked of blood; suggested violence. Wherefore somehow or other Hosila did not survive the meeting with the man he had rashly declared his heir.

But Tup Timur was not to enjoy his heritage long. Almost exactly in two years' time, the ghosts of Shang Tu rose against him and dragged him away into darkness and death. Tormented by his conscience, he enjoined his principal wife to secure the throne not to his own but to one of his murdered brother's children, that the dead man might forgive him in his grave. Hosila had left two sons, Tohan Timur, born in 1320, and Ile Chepe, born in 1326. The Dowager chose the youngest, perhaps hoping for a long regency.



But the child withered like a fragile autumn flower at the first touch of the great cold of winter. In December he breathed his last, and was replaced by his elder brother, the eventual succession being promised to Yen tie kus, son of Tup Timur, a perilous honour, which cost him his life in 1340.

Vengeance came eighteen years later when his cousin, Tohan Timur, who had ordered his assassination, became a terrified fugitive driven out of their great ancestor Kublai Khan's sumptuous capitals back to the grass and the woods and the winds of the wild Mongolian plains. It is doubtful whether this miserable end to the gigantic career of conquest on which Jenghis Khan had launched his tribesmen a century and a half before could have been avoided even if Tohan Timur had concentrated all his energies on the hard task of government instead of frittering them away partly in vicious pleasures, partly in the manufacture of ingenious but perfectly useless mechanical contrivances.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE FALL OF THE YÜAN DYNASTY

**A**T most Tohan Timur would have postponed the catastrophe by a few years, for the strength had gone out of all Jenghis Khan's descendants; Hulagu's, the Ilkhans of Persia, had drifted into utter insignificance; Chagatai's quarrelled among themselves and split his dominions into an eastern and a western half; Batu's committed a series of parricides which lost them the leadership of the Golden Horde. As a final blow a descendant of one of Chagatai's great officials, Timur i Leng, that is Timur the lame, taking advantage of all this weakness and dissension, had just begun to gather the control of the Mahommedanized Mongol Turkish fighting forces into his own hands, turning them against their former masters.

Consequently both the tribute and the general support which the Great Khan residing in the East used to receive from the central and western extensions of the vast Mongol Empire gave out alarmingly. Kublai's heirs were left to their own resources, at their best insufficient to keep down the whole of China. And of course they had long ceased to be at their best. Neither Timur's near relations nor his nobility were the tough yet plastic material out of which Jenghis Khan had kneaded his invincible hosts. Prolonged exploitation of the wealth of the conquered had reduced them to flabby voluptuaries impatient of the discipline without which conquerors cannot maintain themselves.

Besides, their cosmopolitan staff of administrators had mismanaged this exploitation so thoroughly it was rapidly drifting towards bankruptcy. The usual opiate resorted to in such cases, inflated issues of inconvertible paper-money with forced currency, ended in the usual way, loss of credit, hampering trade and making the people suspect that the government before which they had trembled so long was, after all, only a jerry-built structure open to attack.

So why not attack it and shake off that leaden weight of taxation their alien masters had fastened round their necks?



Injudiciously applied and dishonestly collected these taxes withered productivity, emptied the coffers of the taxed without greatly filling those of the tax receiver. A series of physical disasters, droughts, earthquakes, floods further impoverished and unsettled the masses. Acute famines ground entire provinces down to such misery, what was left in them of able-bodied men could only survive by changing from peaceful industrious peasants into brigands of whom the first leader gifted above the average could make a bodyguard ready to declare him Emperor.

Claims to the highest dignity put forward by cloth pedlars and fishermen no longer appeared fantastic. The nervous tension of the times was so great, all things seemed possible except sitting still and following the old routine of quiet work and placid obedience. Apocalyptic prophecies of the coming of Maitreya the loving, compassionate, invincible Buddha added the powerful leaven of religious fervour to the general excitement, and filled the rebels with the conviction so necessary for victory, that Heaven was fighting on their side.

Their pious expectations were encouraged by the Sect of the White Lotus, a secret Society springing to life at all troubled periods and skilfully applying the force of popular faith to political objects. The Mongols, scenting danger, had twice tried to repress it ; first in 1308, again in 1322—and punished some with exile, others with death. The trouble seemed ended.

But forbidden flowers are as attractive as forbidden fruit. The White Lotus Sect, driven into hiding, spread and multiplied its underground ramifications a hundredfold, and in 1351 shot up, such a jungle of rebellion, the best Yüan officials and generals could make no headway against it.

Already in 1337, when Tohan Timur was just seventeen, sporadic jets of rebellion had flared up here and there. In the south Kuangtung and Fukien witnessed disturbances ; in Central China, in Honan one city seized by rioters went up in flames. These attempts were put down ; but they filled the young Emperor's leading minister Po-yen with that angry terror which sees no cure for discontent except in violent repression.

He suspended the public examinations ; forbade the Chinese to own weapons ; to wear yellow ; to learn to speak or read Mongolian ; and took their horses from them ; that is those his officers could find. Most were hidden out of sight and reach in secluded mountain glens.

He even seriously proposed that all Chinese called Chang, Wang, Liu or Chao, the most widespread of all families, should forthwith be executed.

It is to Tohan Timur's credit that he did not sanction this massacre of the innocent. Perhaps he was already tiring of his despotic minister, for shortly afterwards, Po-yen, having caused a Yüan prince, a great-grandson of Mangu, against whom he had a private grudge, to be put to death, was degraded and exiled and conveniently died on his journey south. His misdeeds had been denounced by his own nephew, T'o T'o, who had the dangerous distinction of being one of the few honest, high-principled officials at a hopelessly corrupt Court. After a brilliant career with several years of high ministerial office, his adversaries contrived to get him dismissed and banished, and finally poisoned when he was only forty-two.

His love of learning made him restore the public examinations, and supervise the compilation of the history of the Sung, the Liao and the Chin Dynasties. At the time of his death (1355) the whole of China was already ablaze with rebellion or rather with rebellions and civil wars, for the size of the country, the reawakening of deep-seated provincialisms, the rivalries and inadequacies of the leaders for years prevented the many local risings from coalescing into one united anti-Mongolian movement.

Some of these leaders were mere brigands or pirates out for plunder ; a few had wider views and struggled to evolve embryo centres of the law and order of what they hoped would prove a long-lived dynasty.

The first of these was the Hupeh cloth pedlar, Hsü Shou-hui, drawn into revolt by the monk Ying Yü, a vigorous preacher of the advent of Maitreya Buddha. In 1351 he first called himself Emperor and for about seven years maintained some sort of authority round the middle Yangtze.

Once he even clutched at the old capital of the Southern Sung, but failed to hold it. Finally, Ch'ên Yu-liang, ex-gaoler, and son of a Hupeh fisherman, changing from a trusted friend into an envious rival, had him battered to death with iron crow-bars and started a dynasty of his own.

To make it attractive he even dragged the great name of Han out of the sanctity of its millennial glory and strutted round as a self-created Han Sovereign.

But another Emperor, Han Lin-êrh, had already arisen on the Lower Yangtze, apparently with far better claims.

Was he not a descendant in the ninth generation of an authentic Emperor, Sung Hui Tsung ? At least so his adherents said, for Sung was still a name to conjure with.

His father and grandfather were among the martyrs of the White Lotus Sect. His ablest supporter, Liu Fu t'ung, belonged



to it and had gathered 100,000 fighting members round its banner. As a distinguishing badge he tied a kerchief round their heads in the favourite colour of rebellion—blood-red.

For one year this novel Sung Emperor actually dwelt in his ancestral capital Pien Liang, so changed though from its former greatness, the spirit of the Northern Sung had ceased to dwell there long ago and certainly did not descend on this postscript Sung Emperor Han Lin-êrh.

He lacked the sense or the power to restrain the looting proclivities of his followers, thereby losing the popular support without which no permanent authority could be established. Some of his forces were cut up by the Mongols, others by a rival group of rebels who caught and killed Liu Fu t'ung and would have done the same to him, if Chu Yüan-chang had not come to his rescue and carried him safely to his own stronghold, Chiang Ning (the modern Nanking).

There Han Lin-êrh died in 1367, quietly and unostentatiously, for the rôle of Emperor had already slipped off his shoulders to be taken up by one really called on to play it among the crowd of mediocrities, the masterful man of destiny, Chu Yüan-chang, the plain, pock-marked whilom monk, future founder of the Great and Radiant Dynasty the Ming.

But it took him years of fierce compelling and pertinacious cajoling to convince his contemporaries that he was this man.

His toughest struggle was with the ex-gaoler Ch'ên Yü-liang. In 1363 they met in a life and death struggle on or near the Po Yang lake and for days broke the peace of its lovely scenery with the rap-tap-tap of their war drums, the flames of their war-junks and the whirr of their arrows. One of these struck Ch'ên Yu-liang in the eye and slew him.

Attempts to prolong the existence of his dynasty were effectively crushed by the victorious Chu Yüan-chang.

Nevertheless, his power did not then reach far enough West to deal as summarily with another pretender to Imperial honours, Ming Yü chen. Sent to Szechuan by Hsü Shou-hui, he found local conditions favourable for the eviction of the Yüan and the establishment of a Chinese government, which he took the fancy of modelling on the most ancient lines.

Consequently he scorned anything as modern as Sung or Han, went back as far as the Great Yü and boldly called his dynasty Hsia. For a few years it gave his secluded, well-irrigated, prosperous corner of the world peace and content. But his successor not making friends with the Mings in time, was in 1371 forcibly reminded separatism could not be tolerated in the united China Chu Yüan-chang had at last torn not only from

the descendants of Jenghis Khan, but also from a crowd of quarrelsome incompetent party leaders.

Though almost all these opposed him, they helped to weaken Mongol authority and thereby indirectly contributed to his triumph. Indeed he owed his initial success almost entirely to Kuo Tzŭ-hsing, his maternal uncle, a native of Shansi, who joining Liu Fu-t'ung, was among the first who dared to attack the Mongols in the open.

He chased them out of one important city in Anhui and was preparing to turn them out of many more, when he died in 1355. Chu Yüan-chang, who had married his adopted daughter, took over the command of his bands and continued the wresting of fortified cities out of the grip of the Yüan garrisons.

His next big chance was given him by Fang Kuo-chên, a farmer metamorphosed into a pirate, even into an official. For the Mongols, whom ever since 1348 he had severely harassed all along the coast from the mouth of the Yangtze southwards, had tried to purchase immunity from his lawlessness by taming him with official honours and responsibilities. His domestication, however, did not last long. Piracy was more exciting and possibly more profitable.

Chu Yüan-chang, having established himself in Chiang ning, at once sought Fang Kuo-chên's friendship, without which his hold on the rich maritime provinces would be dangerously precarious. Thanks to his ingratiating tactics he obtained it and though Fang Kuo-chên later on began again to coquet with the Mongols, he had given Chu Yüan-chang his opportunity—and that was all a man of such parts needed.

But the permanency of Chu Yüan-chang's success was due to his own intelligence, which made him see, and his own strength of character which enabled him to carry out the line of conduct required to secure the confidence of the broad masses, those laborious multitudes painfully enduring the changes of masters going on with hideous speed and horrible explosiveness in their harried villages and victimized towns.

In contrast to the other rebel leaders, he allowed no looting or massacring in the cities taken by his men. His mission was to bring the country peace and freedom from Mongol oppression, not to impose on it a worse because pettier tyranny.

Nor would he let himself be clogged with luxuries. When Fang Kuo-chên sent him a superb saddle inlaid with precious stones, no doubt a lucky haul of his piracy, he returned it, declaring what he needed was plain cloth and grain for his soldiers, no sumptuous equipment for himself. He certainly was not used to it.





MING T'AI TSU CHU YÜAN-CHANG (1328-1399)





Born of poor parents, earning his living in his boyhood as a cattle herd, life from the first had moulded him with rough, pitiless hands. Famine and epidemics swept his native district of Feng Yang in Anhui, and when he was seventeen, carried off his parents and all his near relations. A gaunt and hungry orphan he sought refuge in the Buddhist monastery of Sublime Awakening (Huang-chüeh) and became a novice. The memory of the wretched funeral, no coffins, only straw in which to be bed the bodies of his father and his mother almost already mere skeletons, burnt in his mind, and gave him that compassionate understanding for the sufferings of the masses which was one of his strongest qualifications for leadership.

The time spent in the Temple with its routine of simple duties, sweetened by long spells of meditation and the chanting of holy texts in splendid dawns and wonderful twilights gave him that inwardness, that spiritual concentration which made him so much stronger than the men of mere action.

Not that he despised action. On the contrary, when Kuo Tzŭ-hsing's bands seized Fêng Yang and the terrified monks fled for their lives, Chu Yüang-chang straightway went to the camps of the rebels and asked to be allowed to join them. He was then about twenty-four and threw himself into the struggle with all the fervour of youth yet with the steady purposeful tenacity of a mind trained both by harsh realities and ideal visions.

Without his military genius and far-sighted statesmanship the break-up of the Mongols would inevitably have been followed by that of China, for until his leadership was fully established, everything seemed to indicate that the deplorable anarchy of the division into North and South or of the Five Dynasties was again going to afflict the country. His greatness can be measured by the magnitude of the double task he accomplished, on the one hand giving the Yüans the blows which sent them flying beyond the Great Wall, on the other destroying the selfish jealousies and provincialisms which shot up like nettles over the ruins of Mongol authority, and what is more, destroying them not by a ruthless reign of terror, but by the swift yet thorough construction of a popular, efficient and powerful government.

When on taking Chiang ning he renamed it Ying Tien Fu, "the City consonant with Heaven," he published a programme and a confession of faith. And when in 1368 he assumed the reign title of Hung Wu, he set up the milestone of a new dynasty, that of the Ming, on a height not so much lower than that of the T'ang or the Sung, a summit shone upon by the

radiant lights of Heaven, blown upon by the strong fresh wind of renewed confidence and freedom.

The year of his accession was a great one for the Chinese people, a brilliant one for the ex-monk Chu Yüan-chang, a sad one for Tohan Timur the ex-Emperor of the Middle Kingdom. It is pleasanter to be an ex-monk than an ex-Emperor. Not that Tohan Timur had enjoyed such an easy time on the Dragon Throne. Everybody seemed to conspire to worry him, his ministers, his eunuchs, his lamas, his relatives, his sons, his wives. He even had to have one of the latter executed for connivance in a plot started by her brothers in favour of a grandson of Mangu's.

Another of his Empresses, a Korean Princess, got him entangled in a foolish punitive expedition against her country at a time when all his troops were needed to keep down the Chinese rebels. Ending in defeat it involved a big loss of men, money and prestige, altogether a most tiresome affair. Really his ministers were arrant fools to have allowed this absurd campaign.

But for all their stupidity they were not as irritating as his relatives. Surely no Emperor had been as plagued as he was by rascally cousins, nephews, uncles, aunts. One aunt, the mother of Yen tie Kus, he managed to get rid of fairly soon, sending her into banishment in 1340, besides getting her son killed. He turned her husband the Emperor Tup Timur's spirit tablet out of the ancestral temple into the lumber room, or perhaps the melting pot. It was made of solid gold, as were all the Yüan tablets. Which fact becoming known, a determined gang of robbers one dark night carried off the lot, possibly though not merely for the sake of the gold, but to destroy the luck of Jenghis Khan.

The White Lotus Sect was by then (1346) already secretly preaching the coming deliverance from the yoke of his descendants. They were certainly not a very prepossessing crowd, at least Tohan Timur got little help or comfort from them. Neither did they from him. Blaming him for the melancholy ebb-tide that was making their old splendour a dreary waste of slime and quicksands, several, more than once, tried to dethrone him.

It came to actual fighting in Mongolia and in Shang Tu. Tohan Timur's own son took sides against his father, at least for a time, and quite a number of Timurs, Chahan Timur, Polo Timur, Tu Kan Timur, dabbled in treason and mostly died a violent death.

So did the majority of the Emperor's ministers. He was so



lacking in real intelligence himself, he instinctively felt jealous of those who possessed some. Envy and suspicion dominated his Court, mingled with much feasting, and fiddling and praying to Lama divinities.

With signal ingratitude these nevertheless failed to protect Kublai Khan's gorgeous palace at Shang Tu, where they had been worshipped so long and so sumptuously. The rival Emperor Han Lin-êrh of that preposterously revived Sung dynasty had sent a flying column of rebels in a wide encircling movement as far north as this Mongolian summer residence, which they pillaged and burnt to their hearts' content. Horrid fellows. Now he would have to spend the hot season in Khanbaligh, a dreadful thought.

Luckily he had a lake there, with a dragon-boat 120 feet long, which his mechanical inventiveness had fitted with a head, a tail, two pairs of feet, which moved and helped to propel this amazing craft. In one of the palace halls he had also set up a huge water clock, possibly with the help of some descendants of that German woman from Metz and the Paris jeweller stranded over a century ago at Ogotai's Court in Karakorum.

It was a marvellous contrivance of wheels and weights and automatic action. In the daytime heavenly, at night earthly spirits marked the hours by striking bells and cymbals, at which signal lions and phoenixes appeared and performed a solemn dance. At noon and at midnight six immortals winged their way up to a fairy tower, and back again to their secret shrines. One could look at it for hours—it had taken months to think out and perfect. Now it worked beautifully. Why was everybody else so much less clever, they let the government clockwork, which was really much simpler, jam and jib in the most alarming manner?

Tohan Timur's slumbers began to be troubled with bad dreams.

One night he saw the sun and the moon crash together in the sky, while in the streets below an iron-tusked boar was running amok.

Once already, in 1358, some evil intentioned gangs had penetrated as far as Tientsin. They had been driven back. But now in the seventh moon of 1368 messengers, not running as fast as they used to, because they had to dodge the rebels in possession of important cross-roads, panted in with the news that 250,000 Ming soldiers fully armed led by Hsü ta, evidently an able general, were heading straight for Khanbaligh, city after city voluntarily opening its gates to their victorious marching.

Two hundred and fifty thousand ! And the Imperial troops were miles away, the city walls in bad repair.

What should he do ?

Parley ? Surrender ? Fight ? Commit suicide ? Or, run ? It was summer, it was hot, it was difficult to think. Then certain information reached him that Tung Chou was in the hands of the Mings ; Tung Chou, astride the Imperial Canal, by which the rice junks reached the capital, Tung Chou a bare fifteen miles away !

He hesitated no longer.

This mouse-hearted descendant of Jenghis Khan the Perfect Warrior, stealthily, in the dark, at midnight crept out of his golden palace, out of his sleeping capital by the gate of Established Virtue, then away full tilt to what was left of Yüan splendour in Shang Tu.

But after Khanbaligh, bravely yet vainly defended by a handful of Yüan officials, had fallen, he skurried yet further North, across a stretch of desert sand, to Ying ch'ang, close to the Tar Nor, where his ancestors had built a palace for a Princess and a town for humbler mortals.

And at Ying ch'ang, as the ice was melting on the lake in the spring of 1370, death overtook him after all.

His son Ai Yu shilitala was elected Great Khan, but driven from Ying ch'ang by the Mings, fled to Karakorum. Chased out of that too in 1372, he died sadly in 1378.

Ten years later (1388) his son and successor was beaten still more seriously by the Chinese near the same Tar Nor and slain on his flight by one of his own people. This ended the effective power of the Yüans even in Mongolia.

For a little while some of their ghosts haunted the blackened beams of the pavilions in Shang Tu where they had been murdered, others on the marble moonlight terrace of their golden Halls in the city of the Great Khan on the anniversaries of his festivals held weird midnight reviews of their troops, their tributaries, their horses, their elephants, and camels. Only for a little while.

Their century and a half of power dropped out of the minds of the people they had conquered, hardly leaving a single trace.



## CHAPTER XXV

### THE BEGINNING OF THE MING DYNASTY

**I**T was possible for the new Ming Emperor to go back to the laws, costumes and traditions of the T'ang without committing an anachronism. Only the Mongol delight in vivid colours lingered on in art-crafts and helped to produce those gaily-decorated porcelains and cell enamels for which the Ming period was to become famous.

The great painters remained untouched by the garish splendour of the Yüan Court and men like Huang Kung wang, Wang Meng, Wu Chên continued to paint with all the restraint and refinement of the old masters—the T'ang masters. The passionate yearning towards the Infinite and Unattainable of the Sung period was no longer understood.

Ni Tsan, however, "Cloud Forest" as he called himself, who, with Wang Cheng, grandson of Chao Mêng-fu on the maternal side, lived through the tempestuous transition from the Yüans to the Mings, for all the limpid serenity of his pictures, was a Sung mystic at heart. It is true he eliminated the poet dreaming of ineffable things amidst stupendous crags, gnarled old pines and tumbling streams. No human being ever strayed into his quiet landscapes.

Yet the mystic dream is there, right amidst the windless trees, the silent shores and the empty view pavilions. By a wonderful power of evocation, with the fewest strokes imaginable, he makes these reveal the divine spirituality of earth without troubling to pass it through the medium of conscious life.

This intense appreciation of earth makes him the proper herald of the Ming period, whose artists were absorbed by the actual world in its endless variety of grandeur and sweetness, power and charm. They made it the subject of most careful study, degenerating into puerile realism only with the mediocre, whom the two centuries of peace and plenty China enjoyed under the Mings naturally bred in profusion. Owing to the nearness of their time to ours the abundance of their output prevents the work of the great masters from standing out as

clearly as those of remoter dynasties. With the unfortunate result that their existence has been denied altogether and a belief been started that in everything the Ming period is a mere echo, a poor one at that, of its mighty predecessors. A libellous myth.

It is true there was a conscious return to ancient models. But after a century of alien dictation, China had to find the way back to her own soul to acquire the self-confidence needed to shake herself free.

With victory assured, the resulting flood of exultation made a meek copying of the past utterly impossible. The beautiful old forms and faiths, however reverently taken up, were transfused with a new glow, moulded by a new spirit.

Like all live periods, that of the Mings achieved a style of its own, as interesting in its way, as that of the T'angs and the Sungs. If it lacks their depth, their delicacy, and their ingenuous directness, it does possess a splendid vigour, a large truthfulness, a joyful grasp of the wealth of the world, probably just the tonic needed after the wistful dreaminess of the Southern Sungs.

Indeed it was this delight in the actual, this energetic will to power which made the establishment of a strong national dynasty possible from out of the confusions and miseries of violent change. The eviction of the Mongols was by no means the swift easy thing chronologies which end the Yüans and begin the Mings in one and the same year lead one to suppose.

Szechuan was not brought into the fold before 1371, when the local Hsia ruler submitted to becoming a mere Earl. Yünnan held out till 1381.

The frontiers everywhere were insecure and had in many cases to be at least roughly both delimited and protected.

The Mongols refused to take their discomfiture lying down, and were not decisively beaten before 1388, in a splendid victory won on Mongol soil, a thing that had not occurred since the best days of the T'ang.

To preserve its fruits three military districts were established, cutting the eastern Mongols off from the rich pasture-grounds south of the Amur. The tribes living there did not object to exchanging Mongolian for Chinese overlordship.

In the West, to protect the great trade-routes, a similar policy was pursued. Military stations were organized and friendly relations cultivated with local rulers, Uighurs and others, whom the break-up of Jenghis Khan's Empire had set free.

But with Timur the Lame's inordinate military activities,



the danger of a new Mongol World-Empire arising was very real.

Alarmed, Hung Wu went out of his way to be pleasant to this terrible warrior, and ordered some merchants of Samarkand (Timur's residence), captured in the battle of the Tar Nor, to be considerably escorted back to their native town.

Later, having consolidated his own power, and more or less taken the place of the Yüans, he felt obliged for the sake of his prestige to claim the tribute these used to receive from the dominions now ruled by Timur.

Therefore, in 1395, he sent envoys to settle this and kindred matters. But though rolls of beautiful Chinese silk accompanied his request, practically reducing this tribute to a fair exchange of brocades for horses, Timur the Lame's temper flared up at the mention of the humiliating word.

It was not for him to pay tribute to the "thief and the scoundrel, the Pig Emperor" who now ruled in China, rather "would he come in person and make the latter his vassal and tributary."

He refused to let the envoys return and made them sit below those of the King of Spain. If he had not expected a greater abundance of loot from India and also been occupied by his war with another power struggling into prominence, that of the Ottoman Turks, he might then and there have unleashed his hordes against China.

As it was, he had, late in 1404, just started leading them West to annihilate the "Pig Emperor" when he met a greater and even more bloodthirsty conqueror than himself, who ended him and all his evil schemes in February, 1405.

His death took the sting out of Turkestan, and what intercourse it subsequently had with the Mings was on the whole quite friendly.

But in 1395 this providential termination of the Western danger could not be foreseen. And there was an Eastern one as well, from the Japanese, who continued to revenge themselves for Kublai's attack on them by years of piracy along the Chinese coasts.

Hung Wu tackled this thorny problem also by first sending polite but highly dignified embassies.

One of them achieved the release of a number of Chinese prisoners; another took a group of Buddhist monks over to Japan with the Ming calendar and missionary proclivities, which caused them to be sent back two years later.

But Japan sent Buddhist monks to the Court of Nan King too, and art-dealers to buy Chinese pictures. On the whole,

however, it preferred to send pirates, and with a view to weakening the new dynasty encouraged the treasonable designs of a southern governor. The resulting flurry of angry messages and threats of war met by cool defiance, thanks to the absence of a jingo Press, blew over harmlessly.

However, strong defensive measures were immediately taken, fleets of war-junks organized, seventy-five towns and boroughs walled in, and local levies raised for garrison duty in the maritime provinces.

Previously, in 1373, huge walls had also gone up round the capital Ying T'ien fu. They had a circumference of thirty-two miles, and were probably aimed as much against internal as against external enemies. Of these the new dynasty, like everything new, had plenty, though not half as many as Hung Wu, growing hard and suspicious in his old age, imagined it had. He began to smell treason in the slightest contradiction, the smallest stir of discontent or independent action. Then he would lash out furiously, never resting till the entire family and all the friends of the supposed culprit had been wiped out of existence.

Already, in 1373, he ordered a scholar, Kao Ki, whose epigrams he did not appreciate, to be sawn in two and continue his witticisms in the next world.

In 1382 the Grand Judge Li Chu lu, having ventured to remonstrate against Hung Wu's excessive partiality for Buddhist monks and even gone so far as to speak slightly of their faith, the infuriated Emperor, seeing red, had him slain on the spot without even the pretence of any sort of trial. Another high official, Wang Yün tao, though let off with his life, was beaten and exiled to the tropical heat of Hainan merely because he had most sensibly proposed that the iron mines of his district in Chihli should be fully exploited.

Another unfortunate, a Taoist, presenting His Majesty with a writing flown down from Heaven, found he had gone to the wrong address. By way of encouraging this type of literature Hung Wu had him executed as a disturber of the public peace.

A very much greater than he, the farmer soothsayer, Li Chan-chang, and Chu Yüan-chang's intimate friend and adviser almost from the very beginning of his career, suddenly saw himself accused of treason, which owing to that deplorable disregard of legal forms so frequent in China, was practically the same as being convicted and condemned.

A widespread plot being suspected, not only he, but nineteen prominent families were done to death.

And this was mild to what was to follow three years later





MU YING (+ 1392 A.D.)  
CONQUEROR OF THE SOUTH UNDER THE FIRST MING EMPEROR





(1393) when the general Lan yü, being accused of plotting against the new dynasty, 15,000 human beings came to a cruel and violent death either on the scaffold or in the torture chambers of the town which the Emperor had once called "the City consonant with the will of Heaven." Fifteen thousand! A grim record.

No doubt benevolence alone would not have wholly mastered that welter of fantastic hopes, overweening ambitions, cupidities, rivalries, brutalities and general aversion to restraint, which the period of war and dissolving authority had engendered, and which the thick sediment of barbarization left by the receding Mongol tide aggravated still further.

A certain amount of severity was needed for securing obedience to what was, after all, only one aspirant to supreme power out of many.

Though Hung Wu's conciliatory behaviour had made him far more popular than any of his rivals, he yet lacked the compelling attribute of prescriptive right as much as they. Consequently those of his contemporaries who could not see the Heaven-ordained sovereign in this ex-monk with the quickness required, as well as the bullies and brigands anxious to prolong the anarchy on which they thrived, had to be whipped into line.

But the sanguinary stifling of all initiative, and of freedom of opinion, the relapse into the savage custom of extending the death penalty to the whole family of the guilty cannot be excused as a political necessity. In part it must be attributed to the gross callousness with regard to inflicting pain and taking life with which Jenghis Khan's passion for conquest, just then revived by Timur the Lame with his flaming cities and pyramids of skulls, had tainted human thought.

Hung Wu's son, though a young and extraordinarily able man, caught that infection too, and indulged in reckless slaughter to establish his power. But he really had a great amount of organized resistance to overcome.

This was not the case with his old father, whose lamentable falling away from his original benevolence is difficult to explain even after making full allowance for the harshness of his times. Whether he became possessed by the savage hatred of the ageing male against the younger generation, whether his nerves gave way under the strain of the incessant difficulties and complexities of power after years of hard fighting to obtain it, or whether the weary disillusionment of the born leader over the stupidity and baseness of men in general constantly thwarting all efforts to help them, found a bitter relief in killing as many as possible, it is certain that the popular hero of 1360 had by

1390 grown into a terribly dangerous master to serve. Yet he began admirably.

The companions who had helped him to victory were loaded with honours, and twenty-one shrines put up in a special temple to receive their soul tablets on their demise for perpetual remembrance.

The great general Hsü ta and even Fang Kuo-chên, ex-farmer and now also ex-pirate, died comfortably under the silk coverlets and baldachins reserved for dukes. Realizing how largely the only sure foundation of prosperity—order—depends on an enlightened moral law, he took pains to demonstrate his reverence for the Master Teacher of morality. He worshipped K'ung Tzū's tablet in the Imperial college, sent a deputy to offer sacrifice at his grave and ordered his temple in Chufu to be rebuilt.

Schools were opened in the towns, whenever possible in the villages as well, triennial examinations for the selection of officials introduced, and though again superseded for a few years by a system of appointments through personal recommendations, there was a complete return to them in 1382.

The contributions of choice products, with which under the Yüans various districts had to fatten the Emperor, were abolished, Hung Wu declaring it was the sovereign's duty to feed his subjects, not the other way about.

But of course he had to collect some revenue. Land, tea and commercial transactions were taxed, salt remained a government monopoly.

The administration was reorganized: the four boards of the Yüans were replaced by six, civil appointments, rites, war, justice, works, among whom the powers of a prime minister were distributed in 1380, because one prime minister was then, rightly or wrongly, declared guilty of treason.

Afraid of trusting any but his own kith and kin, he made his twenty-four sons governors with the title of Kings, a return to the feudal days of the Han dynasty, for whose founder Liu Pang he felt unbounded admiration.

There was much similarity between them, for he too, like Liu Pang, had "arisen out of the furrows of the fields" to guide his country back to strength and unity, out of the hell of civil war. Judged by that achievement, as he should be, and not by the failings of his old age, Hung Wu, the "Beggar King" as he was called, must undoubtedly be classed with the genuinely great, and though perhaps nobody grieved much when his long strangely varied and valuable life came to an end on the 24th of June, 1398, the work he had accomplished remained, being



built on a strong foundation and endowed with a power of growth and adaptability which kept his less gifted descendants on the Dragon Throne for more than two entire centuries.

The epitaph Kang Hsi inscribed on a stela in his mausoleum 300 years later, extolling his reign as equal in glorious achievement with the T'ang and the Sung, was no idle flattery, but the verdict of a great statesman out of the intimate understanding reached through similar experience.

However, immediately after Hung Wu's death, it almost seemed as if he had, after all, laboured in vain, that the country had only been temporarily cured of its evil habit of internecine strife. He had been unlucky in his choice of an heir. His eldest son, whom he first made Prince Imperial, predeceased him, dying in 1392. This reopened the question of the succession, always a dangerous one where the claim of primogeniture is not sufficiently established to exclude all possibility of a wider choice among the reigning sovereign's sons, grandsons or even brothers.

In this case, the choice lay between the deceased Prince Imperial's son Yün Wên and the eldest of Hung Wu's surviving sons, the fourth, also the ablest, Chu Ti. Made Prince of Yen and entrusted with the difficult task of maintaining the security of the north-eastern frontier, Chu Ti ruled with energy and ability, though with a hard and merciless hand. Unlike his father, who began gently and ended violently, Chu Ti began fiercely and ended benignly. Hung Wu recognized a chip of the old block in him and saw his face in a dream changing into that of a stupendous dragon. He felt inclined to make him his heir, but his council strongly advised against this, urging that the succession should go to his grandson. It seems likely that Chu Ti's high-handedness had made him many enemies, and that Hung Wu's councillors, tired of feeling their heads sit loosely on their shoulders, were looking forward to a milder régime under Yün Wên, a studious, gentle youth, with a receding forehead and a talent for poetry.

Hung Wu himself may have been somewhat afraid of his Dragon son, for he took his ministers' advice, made Yün Wên Prince Imperial, and would not allow any of his sons to be called to his death-bed. Nor did the ministers give them any chance of crowding into the capital with their armed retainers on the plea of attending their father's funeral. That was hurried up, done with and ended within six days of Hung Wu's closing his eyes.

Yün Wên, then aged sixteen, was safely installed and the announcement of his accession conveyed to his uncles simul-

taneously with that of their father's death. They retorted with angry sabre rattling which the young Emperor's government in its turn answered by fulminating edicts of degradation and exile.

One uncle committed suicide, the others dropped into poverty and obscurity with one momentous exception.

The Prince of Yen, living in Khanbaligh, renamed Pei P'ing, being in charge of the frontier ward, possessed war-seasoned troops, whose efficiency and numbers he was eagerly increasing. There was no empty sabre-rattling about *their* drill.

In 1400 he set them in motion with the settled purpose of supplanting his nephew on the throne.

He succeeded, but it took him two years of fighting to do it, victory swaying indecisively from one side to the other. His generalship was undoubtedly the better one, yet the issue was finally decided by that usual undercurrent of open fighting—treachery.

Treachery opened the gates of the capital to his army, treachery set the palace on fire. The young Empress in despair dashed into the flames and perished.

Whether her husband shared her fate or managed to escape will never be known with certainty.

It may be romantic legend, it may be sober history, but it is on record that when the city gates were already in possession of the enemy, an attendant produced an iron-bound copper chest, saying Hung Wu had entrusted it to him to be opened only in case of extreme peril. It contained the complete outfit of a Buddhist monk, even a pair of scissors for cutting off the hair, also directions for flight along an underground aqueduct to a distant temple. So the young Emperor slipped out of the palace, out of the town and spent many years world-forgotten and world-forgetting in various southern monasteries.

In 1441, years after his uncle's death, his existence was discovered and he was taken to the new capital Peking, given a secluded apartment in the Palace and on his peaceful death a yet more secluded corner, a quiet grave near but distinctly outside the Imperial burial-ground.

However, his Uncle, anxious to declare the throne vacant, had the charred and totally unrecognizable remains of the Empress buried in 1402 as being those of the young Emperor. Posthumously he was called Hui Ti, the Humane Sovereign Lord, apparently deservedly—for many of his adherents loved him with a passionate devotion which preferred death to service under the man who had displaced him.

Fang Hsiao-ju, a distinguished philosopher and scholar,



whom Hui Ti had loaded with honours, when personally requested by the victorious prince to take office under him, called him a thief and usurper to his face, though he knew what it meant, death by quartering for himself and his whole family.

Several of his pupils, all Hui Ti's ministers, the concubines and eunuchs who had escaped the palace fire, altogether nearly 900 human beings, were executed, evidence both of the nephew's popularity and of the uncle's ruthlessness.

Yet when the latter proclaimed himself Emperor on the first moon of 1403 he took Yung Lo, "Enduring Joy," for his reign title, and because behind his brutal way of enforcing obedience there was the driving power of a vast ability, he did succeed in fully justifying his optimism despite the immense amount of grief he caused at his accession. Like his father, he did not follow the old custom of changing the appellation of the reign whenever some striking event seemed to need special commemoration. Since 1368 each Emperor's reign name is known by one only, and the Emperors themselves are more frequently referred to by that title than by the temple name given them at their death. Thus Chu Ti's temple name Ch'êng Tsu is hardly known, whereas his reign name Yung Lo ranks with the most famous in Chinese history. On excellent grounds.

In many ways he was the second founder of the Ming dynasty, a fact recorded in his temple name Ch'êng Tsu, the Completing Ancestor. It was he who definitely made the Mings the heirs of the Yüans, taking over their grandiose claims of effective suzerainty over all their neighbours.

Since Timur the Lame advanced the same pretensions, the inevitable clash between him and the Mings was only averted by his death.

As there could be no certainty that his aggressive schemes might not at any time be renewed by his sons, Yung Lo established a military post at Hami, that important city on the great northern trade-route, where China never failed to keep a garrison at all periods of political strength. Though several times raided, and even temporarily occupied by the Turks, Hami was not definitely lost to the Mings before 1513.

To several of the petty rulers on the western borders Yung Lo bestowed the old title of Chung Shun wang, "the Faithful and Obedient Prince," accompanied by a gold seal, in return for which they sent him tribute, jade, horses and sheep. Once 2,000 of the latter were brought to bleat their homage in front of the Son of Heaven's residence.

With his eastern neighbour beyond the sea—Japan—rela-

tions of great politeness and even cordiality were established, due to a desire to check the evil of piracy. More than once the Japanese government sent Yung Lo batches of its own piratical subjects found guilty of plundering Chinese cities, to be dealt with at his pleasure. They were stewed alive like so many lobsters.

Another time the Shogun Yoshimitsu sent 1,000 ounces of gold, probably in compensation of losses sustained by Chinese subjects at the hands of Japanese pirates.

In 1406 Yung Lo conferred a royal title on the Japanese ruler and in 1416, receiving a few more Japanese pirates for his boiler, graciously let them off with an admonition to reform. In the South and beyond he took up Kublai Khan's strong policy and repeatedly sent Ch'êng Ho, who though an eunuch was brilliant both as an admiral and as a diplomatist, to renew or open relations with the ports and principalities along the whole route of the silk and porcelain-bearing junks from Shanghai to the Persian Gulf. Even the Red Sea was reached. On the whole the intercourse thus established, was friendly, and China's demand of tribute willingly conceded, since it really only amounted to a kind of commission asked by the government for the opportunities it offered to lucrative business.

But once in Sumatra and in Ceylon collisions occurred and bloodshed. The King of Ceylon, having tried to wipe out Ch'êng Ho and his landing party, was captured with his whole family and deported to Yung Lo's capital. After which his people meekly paid tribute till 1465 and treated their Chinese visitors exceedingly politely.

With the Annamites friction festered into serious war, internal disunion provoking interference and conquest.

Their legitimate ruler, displaced by an usurper, had appealed to Yung Lo for help, which was given, but not in the required strength. The 5,000 Chinese soldiers sent to reinstate him were ambushed and slain. So was he.

In revenge Yung Lo sent his ablest general Chang Fu to break the country's backbone and turn it into a Chinese province. Which was done.

But as there were thirty-two million Annamites their broken backbone soon set and compelled China to spit them out again.

Under the mighty Yung Lo, though, she did keep them down, with a colonial administration functioning energetically, squashing all attempts at revolt, setting up 472 tribunals, also schools which in a spirit most characteristic of the Ming period, taught Buddhism as well as the Chinese Classics.

But under Yung Lo's grandson in 1428 native aspirations to



independence found an able leader who declared himself King and defied the Chinese army sent against him.

Nevertheless, anxious to avoid prolonged warfare, he compromised matters by acknowledging China's suzerainty and agreeing to pay her tribute. The experiment of governing Annam directly by Chinese officials was quietly dropped. The requisite military backing was not available, because the Imperial forces had more than enough to do to keep the Mongol menace at bay.

Already under Yung Lo nomad aggressiveness had found a fresh incarnation in Alutai, who proclaiming Ben ya shi li, a descendant of the Yüans, Great Khan at Bimbaligh (the modern Urumtsi), threatened the peace of what still was an ill-defined and therefore troublesome frontier.

The general he sent North having been defeated, Yung Lo took the matter in hand himself. He believed in swift hard strokes. Leaving Pei P'ing in the early spring of 1411, he closed with the enemy on the banks of the Onon, where 205 years ago Jenghis Khan's momentous leadership had first been acknowledged. Its last effects, like the first, filled the steppe with the uproar of battle, only this time it was the Mongols, not the Chinese, who broke and fled.

However, fighting on their own ground they were much less vulnerable, the desert tracks unknown to the victors always offering a safe retreat. Yung Lo therefore temporized both with Alutai and with the western branch of the Mongols, the Walas or Oirats, who more out of hatred of Alutai, given to stealing their horses, than out of love towards China were willing to admit her overlordship—if not pressed too far.

In 1415 they apparently thought it had been, and again Yung Lo led an army North. A kind of peace was patched up, but Alutai's ambition broke it in 1422.

He had proclaimed himself Khan, after Ben ya shi li's assassination, and seemed determined to revive the Great Khanate's power. With a less able adversary than Yung Lo he might have succeeded. As it was, he actually invaded northern Shansi and Chihli in 1424.

At such insolence the tiger woke up in Yung Lo. Though old and sick, he flung his army against the invaders with such vehemence they turned tail and fled.

Finally, yet not before 1435, Alutai was ferreted out and slain by his old enemy Tohuan, head of the Walas.

Some mediocrity descended from the Yüans, was made Great Khan, but the real power passed into the hands of the Wala chieftains Tohuan and his son Yeh hsien. The latter

was to drag a great grandson of Yung Lo's into captivity, which shows the magnitude of the danger threatening the Mings from that quarter.

Yung Lo as Prince Chu Ti had learnt to take its correct measure. The anxiety it caused him explains and justifies his whole career. Because he felt that a youth with a receding forehead and a turn for poetry was not of a size to cope with the gigantic difficulties of this vital problem, he deprived him of the throne. Because he knew that this supremely important defence should be kept under the Emperor's eye, he faced all the trouble, expense and grumbling incidental to moving the capital from the Yangtze to the former Khanbaligh.

And because by a strange premonition he sensed that somewhere beyond the Great Wall there lurked his dynasty's deadliest foe, he caused himself to be buried within measurable distance of its crenellated heights, that his spirit might mount guard there and annihilate the invaders with his curses as he had smitten them with his sword while still in the flesh.

For he was a tower of strength to his people, a far-sighted statesman, a brilliant general, a capable administrator, a glorious poet who wrote his inspirations not like his nephew in ink on small sheets of paper, but in stone and masonry, in stupendous avenues, magnificent altars, temples, gateways, towers on the wide expanse of his northern capital Peking and of the beautiful hills where he built his tomb.

Ying T'ien fu became the southern capital Nan ching—theoretically. In practice, although Yung Lo's successor, Jên Tsung, thought of permanently moving back to it, the plan was not carried out, and since 1421, Nanking was seldom honoured with the pomp and movement of the Imperial Court.

Yung Lo's abundant energy also overflowed into art and literature, lifting them out of the dimness of their long seclusion back into the glow of royal favour, which took the useful form of setting groups of scholars to work on the compilation of two vast works. The smaller one (*The Sing li Ta tsüan shu*) was a symposium of the Philosophy of Chou Tun-i, Chu Hsi and their school of commentators, in seventy books, and was published in 1415.

The larger one, indeed the largest encyclopædia ever produced, kept five principal, twenty sub-directors and 2,269 minor scholars at work for two years collecting, sifting, arranging, transcribing the essence, sometimes the whole substance of all the leading works on astronomy, geography, medicine, occultism, Buddhism, Taoism, arts and crafts. The table of contents alone filled sixty books, the work itself 22,877.



By a sad error of judgment the cost of cutting the wood-blocks for printing the gigantic work was considered too high, with the result that though between 1562 and 1567 two fresh copies were made, 100 clerks transcribing three leaves a day, most of their monumental labour has perished.

However, it had accomplished its main purpose and saved valuable pieces of the older literature from destruction, as these were occasionally published in separate volumes from Yung Lo's Ta Tien (Great Records) as the compilation was called.

Standing at the beginning of the Ming period it fitly embodies the Ming mentality, which while at heart far removed from the past, steadily looked to it for guidance; a wise choice, for the law of its growth being breadth not depth, it could not by itself have originated anything truly great. Given the support of ancient tradition, it did produce works of permanent value and Ming artists and artisans, poets and scholars fitted splendid pictures of their own into the old framework.

Among the painters whom Yung Lo singled out for patronage there was a Pien Wên chin who "could paint the sweet smile of a flower and the scream of a bird on the wing" and a Chiang Tzũ ch'êng who specialized in Buddhas and Bôdhi-sattva. The Emperor ordered several of these for "presentation to foreign nations." These surely included the Japanese, who continued to be eager purchasers of Chinese pictures and porcelains.

It was in the making of the porcelains that the Ming Age showed most inventiveness, and Ching Tê Chên, where a new Imperial factory had been built at the foot of the Jewel Hill at the very beginning of Hung Wu's reign, and twenty, by 1430 as many as fifty-eight kilns, sprang into existence, developed a prodigious activity.

Under Yung Lo the exquisite bodiless eggshell porcelain and the decoration in blue and copper red under glaze were the fashionable novelties, fetching fabulous prices. The cost of production was fabulous too, as the difficulties of a still highly experimental manufacture were very great.

That there was a public able to pay fantastic sums for small and fragile cups and vases shows how thoroughly the country had recovered from the misery of the wars of transition.

And this again proves that the administration set up by Hung Wu functioned well, producing the sense of security without which the nation cannot follow its wealth-producing labours with the confidence and regularity needed.

It is therefore surprising to find Yung Lo taking to the evil habit of entrusting eunuchs with important functions, even

placing some in posts from which they could spy on the regular magistrates. The explanation may be that as a result of his violent seizure of the throne and cruel persecution of the legitimate Emperor's adherents, he was personally unpopular with the official class, and that this incipient disloyalty needed careful watching.

He certainly has the further excuse that he only employed eunuchs of real ability, like the famous navigator Ch'êng Ho, and that he was far too active and stern a master to run any danger of letting his servants get out of hand. He has also been blamed for the favours he showered on Buddhist monks in a profusion reminiscent of the days of Kublai Khan. Like Kublai Khan, he went to Tibet for his Court chaplains, sending his chief eunuch on a special mission to induce the patriarch Halima, famous for saintliness and magic powers, to exchange his mountain monastery for the Imperial Court of China.

The Tibetan ecclesiastics who had not yet forgiven the last Yüan Emperor Tohan Timur for having curtly dismissed his Grand Lama, besides having a keen sense of where the greatest power happened to lie, gladly accepted the advances made them by the Mings and wore the grand titles these bestowed on them with much gusto.

Halima was created Ta Pao Fa Wang, Prince of the Great and Precious Law and Great and Excellent Buddha of the Western Heaven. His three disciples were made Kuo Shi Teachers of the Empire, a title which carried with it authority over all Buddhists in China.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE MING PERIOD

THE reason for Hung Wu's and Yung Lo's friendliness to the Tibetan Abbots was no doubt purely political. They were anxious to win them away from the Mongol to their own side.

But there was a deeper reason for their choosing Tibetan Lamas as the heads of Chinese Buddhists. Since the fall of the Sungs religious life had ceased to pulsate very vigorously in the old Buddhist monasteries. They were still beautiful havens of refuge to poets and artists, but as often happens to the custodians of great spiritual treasures, the monks had grown sleepy and if they moved at all, moved dreamily in old grooves mumbling rather than actively praying over their beads.

Lamaism, on the other hand, perhaps just because intellectually so much coarser, stood in the full current of life and growth at that period, active, alert, acquisitive, unafraid. It turned old royal citadels into gigantic monasteries, made the fire of its enthusiasm flash forth from stupendous mountain peaks, a beacon of heaven-enkindled light alike to nomads and settlers on the dusty plains below. It was a living faith, a firm conviction, a force altering Tibet and preparing to alter its neighbours as opportunity offered.

The full weight of the great reformer Tsong Kha pa's influence was now making itself felt. Born about 1355 near the Blue Lake (Ko Ko Nor), his theological studies in Lhasa convinced him that drastic removal of all manner of superstitious accretions and laxities was needed to bring the Tibetan Church back to scriptural standards.

Strict celibacy, a greatly reduced use of magic, annual periods of retirement and meditation and reunions for joint prayer and religious exercises were among the reforms he preached and put through. His adherents wore yellow hats and girdles, instead of the red ones used by the unreformed clergy; thence they were called the Yellow, the other the Red

Monks. Their real name, however, was Gelug pa, the Brotherhood of Virtue.

They represented a Protestant puritanical movement directed against the corruption of a clergy grown too rich and worldly. Not that Tsong Kha pa or his nephew and successor Geden dub scorned worldly power. On the contrary, by taking the clergy's claim to superior holiness seriously they increased its influence, and by using the theory of constant reincarnations for filling vacancies in the sees of Lhasa and Tashil humpo the Yellow Monks hit on an excellent device for preserving continuity in the government of the Church, since, while frequently investing infants with the dignity of Dalai Lama, it left the executive power in the hands of experienced regents.

Tsong Kha pa soon gained so much ground, his fame spread beyond the borders of Tibet, and Yung Lo invited him to his Court. On the plea of old age he declined this invitation, but sent his disciple, Byams-chen-chos-rje, as the Intermediary through whom the spiritual lights of Tibetan Buddhism might shine at the Imperial Court.

Yung Lo treated him so generously, he was able to build a large monastery on his return to Lhasa in 1417. He then went back to China for good, and does not seem to have suffered from home-sickness, as he reached the venerable age of eighty-four.

The Lamas, however, were not the only religious teachers Yung Lo favoured. He had far too much perspicacity to neglect the old national cult which was the foundation of all authority in state and society. Indeed the Mings with hardly an exception followed the principle that Buddhism and Confucianism should receive equal support since both were equally needed.

Wan Li in one of his edicts aptly defines them as the wings of one bird, distinct yet alike and bound to work together to fulfil their proper function.

Consequently they built, restored and endowed not only a great number of Buddhist monasteries, but created superb altars and temples to the vast mysterious invisible spirits which had watched over the destinies of the race since its earliest recorded existence.

Yung Lo enclosed an immense space in the southern suburb of Peking round the Altar of the Supreme Spirit, that of Heaven. Chia Ching, the most prolific builder of the dynasty, added the Altars of the Spirits of the Sun, and the Moon, the Hills and the Rivers, as well as the large Hall of Commemoration for the makers of China's political greatness, her ablest Emperors, kings, statesmen, generals, the Li Tai Ti Wang Miao.





MING EMPRESS T'AI TSU





And not only were these and Hung Wu's new temple to K'ung Tzū in Chufu built in sumptuous style, but the elaborate ritual of music, dances, sacrifice and prayer prescribed by tradition but often neglected, was regularly maintained, making these impressive monuments an active influence in contemporary life.

Having thus provided for the country's religious needs, the great builders among the Ming Emperors also provided for its security by constructing miles and miles of new walls and restoring old ones.

The Great Wall was extensively repaired ; lesser walls went up round every city, solid brick masonry replaced old mud ramparts.

An Arab embassy which reached Peking in 1420, has left a record describing " Khanbaligh as a very great and beautiful town but with its walls still under construction and hidden by thousands of scaffoldings."

Four years later their mighty builder the great Yung Lo was taken out of the city he loved so much in a huge sarcophagus to find his well-earned rest in his Tomb enduring in Time and Space, the Chang Ling, for which a gifted student of Fêng Shui had discovered a wonderful site years before (1410).

His first Empress, the daughter of Hung Wu's great general Hsü ta, who had died in Nan ching in 1407, was already buried in the stone vault dimly lit by walrus candles which could burn for centuries.

Five centuries have passed by now, yet the gigantic tumulus with its ramparts, its soul tower and crown of oak trees still guards the last sleep of the Imperial pair.

Their eldest son became Emperor and because of his release of political prisoners and lightening of the burdens of taxation was canonized as Jên Tsung (The Benevolent Ancestor), by which name he is always referred to.

He seems to have been opposed to many of his father's ideas ; for instance, he placed his confidence in scholars not in eunuchs ; he officially rehabilitated Hui Ti's followers branded and slain by Yung Lo ; he planned to move the capital back to Nanking. But death interfered, removing him to the tomb of Offerings (Hsien Ling), a much humbler one than his father's, and placing his eldest son on the throne.

He is known as Hsüan Tsung, or according to his reign name as Hsüan Tê (Manifest Virtue), which he fully lived up to. The nine years of his tenure of the supreme power were years of peace and prosperity, largely thanks to his conscientious and enlightened application to government affairs.

Only the first months were troubled by civil strife. Another wicked Uncle, Prince Chu Kao hsü, attempted to copy the example set by Yung Lo and supplant his young nephew.

It came to open fighting in which the Emperor led his own troops, perhaps to make sure of their loyalty. That after his victory and the Uncle's death 640 of his adherents were condemned to execution, 1,500 to exile, shows the extent and seriousness of the movement.

Subsequently, though the princes of the Imperial house retained tendencies to insubordination, breaking into rebellion and bloodshed under a bad Emperor like Wu Tsung, the usual outlet for their rivalries was the quieter but more complicated way of backstairs intrigues. To these ambitious Empresses and concubines, crafty eunuchs and greedy officials, generals, hangers-on, all contributed their quotas of poison gas, the eunuchs of course supplying most.

Hsüan Tê has often been blamed for the latter's steady gain in power, because he provided the young palace eunuchs with a good education. Four distinguished scholars, besides a number of assistants, were engaged for this purpose and had 300 to 400 pupils, later on even 500. But seeing that so able a ruler as Yung Lo systematically employed eunuchs, it is quite possible that they really were indispensable; that the establishment of the strongly centralized government at which the Mings aimed as best adapted to the needs of the time did require at least a percentage of officials wholly dependent on the Crown.

The Lamas, who also had abjured sex and family ties, were used for the same purpose, but they do not seem to have been able to do as the Roman Catholic clergy did in like circumstances and sink their religious character entirely in that of wholly mundane politicians.

Nor were the scholars more serviceable. The drawback of their being family-men could have been got over, for with the best, loyalty to principles always outweighed personal considerations. The insuperable difficulty was that they stood for the right of private judgment, no doubt limited by the sacred texts in which the wisdom of the ages lay crystallized, but absolutely independent of government authority, even avowedly defiant of it, if its actions in any way offended the high ethical standards transmitted by the ancients, and corroborated by man's innate sense of justice.

Risen from all classes merely by the strength of intellectual superiority, they were stiff-necked critics, not the pliant courtiers, who could be trusted to carry out implicitly the orders of the central authority. Yet the menacing state of foreign affairs



and the endemic danger of relapses into disintegrating separatism made the strengthening of that authority highly desirable.

Hsüan Tê therefore seems to have been well advised when he saw to it that the palace eunuchs, who would in any case be entrusted with important posts, should at least be qualified for them by a first-class education. That, in spite of this, they utterly failed to rise to the height of their opportunities and instead of developing into a body of useful public servants of the type of Chêng Ho, they brought forth monsters like the blood-suckers known as the Eight Tigers under Wu Tsung, must be attributed partly to the weakness of particular Emperors and to the influence of Empresses and concubines insatiable in their demands for silks and jewels and jobs for poor relations, partly to the prevalent luxuriousness which made material wealth excessively desirable ; largely to that chronic defect in Chinese life, the absence of law courts impartial and strong enough to set up an adamant barrier between the private vindictiveness of influential men, however highly placed, and the physical safety of innocent citizens.

On the contrary, in 1479, a regular Star Chamber divided into an Eastern and Western office was established with the right to pass capital sentences on anyone suspected of treason. It had its own prison in which torture was freely used, and it could employ the Imperial bodyguards, even provincial troops, for carrying out its decisions, none of them bound by any written or customary law, nor checked by a breath of publicity.

In addition, eunuchs were generally at the head of this frightful caricature of a court of justice. No wonder its records are a long calendar of crimes, with the criminal on the judges' bench and the innocent in the dock.

Protests against it never led to more than a temporary suspension of its nefarious practices. The will to absolute justice was never strong enough to effect a radical cure.

When it was possible for Ying Tsung's favourite eunuch, Wang Chên, to imprison two governor-generals because they would not stoop to buy his favour, and to fling a member of the Imperial Academy who had spoken against his tyrannies into jail and get him murdered there ; when Wu Tsung's chief eunuch, Liu Chin, could get fifty-three high officials executed simply because their honesty was an obstacle to his and his gang's speculations, it becomes clear that the chief blame for such a dangerous state of things lies not so much with the eunuchs as with a system which provided no safeguards whatsoever against abuses of power by morally inferior men, though

experience everywhere teaches that these are precisely the type that climbs into power most easily and clings to it most tenaciously.

That eunuchs forced to overcome violent prejudices were, like all members of a despised class, more open than the average to the temptations of office because less restrained by an inherited code of honour, was perfectly well known. But the obvious danger was met most imperfectly.

Edicts forbidding the political employment of eunuchs, would be written, proclaimed, admired; punishment would descend heavily on some wretch who had gorged too much at public expense and his ill-gotten wealth be confiscated.

But when an ambitious concubine was very pretty, or the treasury was very empty, or some general's actions seemed very suspicious, it was the eunuchs to whom the Emperor turned to protect the favourite from the envy of her rivals; eunuchs who knew how to find fresh money, eunuchs who were sent to nip treason in the bud.

Besides, rascality was by no means entirely confined to them. Wu Tsung's favourite, Chiang Pin, who succeeded the eight Tigers, was every bit as bad as they, and the Imperial soldiers sent to quell the disturbances caused by eunuch misrule proved the greatest scourge of all. It was said of them that whereas the rebels raked the people with an ordinary comb, the soldiers used a toothcomb. As to the officers, they worked with a razor. Wu Tsung himself ordered as many as twelve high officials to be beaten to death because they had the courage to do their duty and advise against one of his preposterous schemes. Therefore, though eunuch corruption must be reckoned among the surface causes of the downfall of the Mings, the profounder one lies in the failure of their statesmen to set up automatically acting checks on flagrant abuses of power.

Which failure again is attributable to a yet deeper cause, namely, that indefinable, invisible yet unescapable power—the spirit of the age. It clearly was not conducive to the inspired conviction, the stern, unflagging effort needed for constructive opposition to corruption and tyranny.

Just as in art the Ming period took the grand simple lines of ancient designs and broke them up in a profusion of curves and convolutions, habitually stressing ornament in preference to substance, similarly in ethics it learnt the plain, lucid, large-minded maxims of the ancient sages by rote, then went and buried them in scrupulous attention to detail, in hair-splitting emphasis on the letter and the externals of the old rites, regardless of their inner significance.



Thus, for instance, P'êng Shih, a high-principled minister under Ying Tsung and Hsien Tsung, the senior classic of his year, was so anxious for the question of the Dowager-Empress Ts'ien's burial to be decided according to precedent, that he stood with his colleagues at one of the Palace Gates and wailed and knocked his head against the ground and refused to obey the Emperor's order to withdraw until the correct decision had been given. He waited six whole hours.

But in the far graver matter of insisting that the Emperor should see his ministers regularly, instead of only listening to eunuchs and their flatterers, he gave way without a struggle.

The appearance of a comet had frightened the Emperor into granting his ministers the audience for which they had been asking for months, but no sooner had they begun to speak than Wan An, the creature of the eunuchs, shouted, "A thousand years of life to the Emperor," the signal for closing audiences. Whereupon, not to offend etiquette, the ministers meekly withdrew, leaving the eunuchs in possession of the field.

Hsüan Tê's edict for giving his eunuchs the benefit of a literary education cannot be held responsible for such mistaken ministerial focussing of the relative importance of affairs. Neither should the minister be condemned for it, since it was part and parcel of contemporary psychology.

Life under the Mings spent itself with whole-hearted zest on the surface of things, with corresponding success in small matters and failure in great ones.

For all that, it achieved far more happiness, beauty and political strength than those who consider originality the only measure of excellence, care to admit. It must not be forgotten that the Mings, usually depicted as nothing but weak eunuch-ridden nonentities, did maintain themselves for 276 years, that is well up to the average duration of Chinese dynasties and this in spite of the fact that they were not a long-lived race and that consequently rulers of wide experience and mature judgment were rare and no less than six of their sixteen Emperors came to the throne before they were twenty.

Yet many were men of genuine culture, conscientious workers, enlightened and generous patrons of art, themselves often painters of considerable talent and builders of beautiful monuments.

Out of the 276 years of their rule quite 200 were years of peace and prosperity, if not along all the borders, certainly in by far the largest and most densely inhabited parts of the country, and that is as much as can be expected from any govern-

ment unassisted by swift means of communication and abundant reserves of men and money.

In 1598 the population had reached  $60\frac{1}{2}$  millions, an increase of 2 millions over the days of Kublai Khan. Piracy, banditry, sporadic revolts occurring among the southern tribes or instigated by ambitious princes did not disturb the bulk of the nation much more than strikes and punitive expeditions on the frontiers of the British Empire disturb Londoners.

That excellent barometer of national wealth, the porcelain factory of Ching Tê Chên certainly registers long spells of the very healthiest productivity, supplying the markets of the world with goods quantitatively and qualitatively unrivalled. Under Hsüan Tê the gorgeous underglaze ruby red first used under Yung Lo and the brilliant blue and white porcelain attained a high degree of excellence. Bold experiments were also made in five-coloured decoration (Wu Tsai) to meet the taste for explicit ornamentation. In cell-enamel, in lacquer, in bronze the reign name Hsüan Tê inscribed on choice pieces is a hall-mark of technical and artistic mastery.

It was a national calamity that this capable ruler died when only thirty-seven. He rests in the Ching Ling, which by his express wish was built on simple, unpretentious lines. His loss was felt all the more keenly, because the Mongol menace was again condensing into grim reality. The terrible horsemen were gathering in their hundreds and their thousands under the energetic leadership of the Oirat Yeh hsien, determined to make the star of the Yüans shine again.

Ying Tsung, Hsüan Tê's son, was a minor when he came to the throne, but as the Regent Empress-Dowager, Jên Tsung's widow, left the direction of affairs in the hands of Yang P'u, Yang Jung and Yang Yü, known as the three Yangs, experienced and scholarly ministers trained in Yung Lo's efficient school, all went well at first.

Trouble began when on reaching years of discretion he showed none at all in the choice of his favourite advisers, though it was perhaps natural that an obsequious eunuch like Wang Chên should captivate the ear of an inexperienced youth more easily than grave strait-laced scholars. Within six years the old Empress-Dowager and the three Yangs died, leaving Wang Chên to mismanage the government unchecked. His most disastrous blunder was giving serious offence to the Mongols by cavilling over the amount of gifts in silk, food and money payable to the men who brought the annual tribute of horses. Cheated of what they considered their due, they soon swarmed back, their numbers increased a hundredfold and



clamouring for revenge. Which they got in the very fullest measure.

The avarice that had made Wang Chên cut down the usual presents to the Mongols, had also played havoc with the pay and equipment of the army. Perhaps with the idea of galvanizing discontented ill-disciplined troops into an efficient fighting force, Wang Chên insisted on taking the Emperor with him on the campaign necessitated by the Mongol invasion. Unluckily this weak-willed young man was incapable of galvanizing anything. In the thick of the battle fought near Hsüan hua fu, south-east of Kalgan, when the Chinese saw themselves surrounded on all sides, his own bodyguard turned tail and left him to be seized by the enemy.

Wang Chên was cut down by the sword of an enraged Chinese officer. More than 100,000 men perished; 200,000 horses and mules fell into Yeh hsien's hands. Only a few fortified cities now lay between him and Peking.

Ill news travelling fast, the Court was soon discussing the capture of its Emperor in terrified whispers. The more nervous at once advised flight South to the shelter of the massive walls of Nanking. But Peking had massive walls, too, now. Early in 1445 "many thousands of men had been set to work on repairs both on them and on the towers." Improvements on the moats had already been started in 1437. They were deepened and lined with bricks or stone; stone bridges replaced the former wooden ones, and the water supply was regulated by locks. Thanks to all this work, finished in the very nick of time, a few months before Ying Tsung's defeat, Peking had become a formidable fortress which could defy anything the Oirats could bring up against it.

The services of a distinguished general, Yü Ch'ien, were also available. Hsüan Tsung's widow, the Empress-Dowager Sun, rose to the occasion, appointed him commander-in-chief, declared the captive Emperor's little son, aged two, Prince Imperial, and his brother at first regent, then as the prospects of release darkened, Emperor.

Yeh hsien had demanded an immense ransom; Ying Tsung's wife, the Empress Ts'ien, who in her anguish prayed to Heaven all night and when utterly exhausted slept on the ground, which injured her thigh, while her weeping impaired the sight of one of her eyes, "sacrificed all the treasures of the Central Palace to redeem him." Yeh hsien, however, kept both the ransom and the prisoner, and made a dash at the capital. But its mighty ramparts, dearth of forage in the burnt-out fields, and a Chinese army sweeping down upon him from the East, made him decamp

more speedily than he had come. Then getting tired of keeping the Emperor on the lead, he let him go home, where alas he was by no means wanted.

His brother, who had taken Ching T'ai (Resplendent Prosperity) as his reign name, had won golden opinions and neither he nor the people desired a change.

Wherefore the ex-prisoner was met at the Eastern Gate of Peace piercing the thick walls of the Purple City in the heart of Peking, and asked to declare his willingness to renounce the throne for good and all. Crushed under a cloud of defeat and humiliation, the poor man was of course obliged to consent and creep away quietly into his allotted corner of the Southern Palace with his wife, his concubines and his unuttered rage. There he watched and waited for seven years, during which Yeh hsien proclaimed himself Khan by the Grace of Heaven of the great Yüan Dynasty. But he was murdered three years later by one of his own men.

Whereupon the Mongols, deprived of his strong leadership, fell to quarrelling among themselves, and the growl of the great Chinese general Yü Ch'ien kept them well outside the Wall. So Northern China could breathe freely again and Ching T'ai indulge in the great passion of all the Mings, the building of beautiful temples, preponderatingly Buddhist. He also began work on his own mausoleum, between those of his father and grandfather. But he was not to rest there.

Family life in the Palace with a sulking brother in one corner, a domineering Empress-Dowager in another, and a Prince Imperial hated by the ruling Emperor, because he stood in the light of his own son whom he wished to make his successor, cannot have been very pleasant.

Ching T'ai vented his ill-humour on his wife, the Empress Cheng Hui, who had committed the unpardonable indiscretion of only giving birth to daughters. He sent her into retirement, but in 1457, in winter, fell seriously ill, which at once made the question of the succession acute.

A creature of Wang Chên's, the eunuch Ts'ao Chi hsiang, a general Shih Hêng, envious of Yü Ch'ien and the Empress-Dowager, worked subterraneously at first, and as the Emperor's illness increased, openly, for Ying Tsung's restoration. Perhaps Ching T'ai's domestic troubles had angered the old lady, or the deposed brother had paid court to her more adroitly. Anyhow, she issued a decree reducing Ching T'ai to his former rank of Prince Cheng, thus implicitly declaring the throne vacant.

Whereupon Ying Tsung, amidst much rejoicing of his own adherents, climbed back there with the reign name Tien Shun.



Getting dosed with news of this kind, it surprised no one, and probably pleased many, that Ching T'ai turned round on his sick-bed and expired.

His brother, remembering those seven years in a corner of the Southern Palace, stopped the work on his grand mausoleum and had him buried as a mere prince on a site in the Western hills reserved for princes, divorced Empresses and Imperial concubines. However, as a special favour, or perhaps as a handy way of getting rid of her, he ordered his sister-in-law, Ching T'ai's widowed Empress, to commit suicide and accompany her husband to his new grave. The prospect did not appeal to the poor woman at all, and she contrived to get Li Hsien, an influential minister highly esteemed for his learning, to show Ying Tsung the uselessness of her immolation. The appeal succeeded, and the reprieve agreed with her so well, her funeral was postponed for nearly half a century.

Possibly Li Hsien's eloquence made Ying Tsung consider this whole question of the immolation of women for burial with or near a deceased Emperor. Hung Wu had been followed into the Beyond by thirty-eight out of his forty concubines; Yung Lo by all his, a modest sixteen; Jên Tsung by four out of seven; Hsüan Tê by seven out of eight. No doubt with many the immolation was voluntary, a gesture of supreme devotion to their dead lord. But others only submitted to it under pressure of accepted usage, inwardly bitterly rebelling against the sacrifice of their young lives. Realizing this, and in consonance with the gentler cast of mind beginning to prevail, Ying Tsung in his last will absolutely forbade the gruesome custom. Since then it quietly dropped out of fashion.

Unfortunately this was his only humane act. The seven years of his new reign were trying years of tight-rope dancing for all within reach of his favourites' displeasure. Even those who had actively worked for his restoration were given reason to regret the deposed Ching T'ai.

The young and comparatively harmless fool whom Yeh hsien had taken for a walk into Mongolia was a fool still, but neither young nor harmless. Long brooding over his wrongs had soured him into a morose tyrant, scenting treason in the slightest show of independence and plots in the most casual conversations.

The first to suffer was Yü Ch'ien, the patriot who had saved country and dynasty at the time of the great Mongol invasion. But he had favoured Ching T'ai, and what was worse his fame totally eclipsed that of Shih Hêng. This general, therefore, having obtained Ying Tsung's favour, turned against his old chief, and with the assistance of the gang of miscreants always at

hand to destroy the truly great, contrived to get the man he envied condemned to the lingering death as a traitor.

It was noticed that on the day of his execution the sky was black with ominous clouds, demonstrating divine displeasure at such atrocious injustice and ingratitude. Perhaps Ying Tsung felt that he had made himself unpopular. His distrust grew, fed by the evil whispers of Ts'ao Chi-hsiang, Lu Kao and another eunuch Mên Ta who saw their chance of prodigious blackmail profits in the Emperor's suspiciousness. Mên Ta, being placed in charge of the criminal department and using the Imperial bodyguards as detectives, soon got the palace dungeons so full they had to be enlarged. Even the highest officials found the only way of escaping their horrors was to keep Mên Ta's and his gang's claws well greased.

Whether Shih Hêng omitted to do this or whether, seeing the Emperor's unpopularity, he really schemed to replace him, by 1459 he found himself under lock and key on a charge of having spoken seditious words, and whether the ghost of Yü Ch'ien, the man he had judicially murdered, visited him in that gloomy solitude and took him away to the tribunal of eternal Equity, or whether he just lost heart and died a natural death, belongs to the many secrets that will never be known.

The next to fall was Ts'ao Chi-hsiang, who over-estimating his power, openly attacked Mên Ta and his clique. Lu Kao was slain by Ts'ao Chi-hsiang's adopted son Ts'ao Chin, and an all-night battle outside the palace gates between the rival gangs must have made Ying Tsung's hair stand on end with fear. Ts'ao Chi-hsiang was defeated, seized and publicly disembowelled. Ts'ao Chin committed suicide.

Mên Ta reigned supreme. But only for another three years. In the bitter cold of 1464 Ying Tsung fell ill and though only thirty-seven died and was buried in the Tomb of Abundance (Yü Ling).

His son, the Prince Imperial, ruled in his stead, taking as his reign name Ch'êng hua (Complete Reform), perhaps with a side glance at Mên Ta's government by blackmail. He certainly squashed his evil activities at once, banishing him to the sub-tropical Kuangsi, which did not tend to prolong his life.

But the tribe of corrupt eunuchs did not die with him, and Hsien Tsung, for all his good intentions, was too much of an indolent sentimentalist, mere wax in the wicked little hands of his passionately adored favourite Wan Kuei, to keep a watchful eye on their integrity.

The Western Tribunal established in 1479 bore an ominous resemblance to Mên Ta's criminal investigations department,



the more so as the leading concubine's confidential eunuch, Wang Chih, was placed in charge of its inquisitorial powers. He abused these so flagrantly, the tribunal had to be closed, but as Wang Chih and his patrons had found it a regular gold-mine, it did not remain closed long.

When an expedition was sent west, Wang Chih, scenting war profits, got himself appointed Brigade General under the Commander-in-chief Wang Yüeh, his secret confederate. The campaign was successful, but when the eunuch, more arrogant than ever, returned to his Western Tribunal, a particularly fearless Censor managed to get him impeached, disgraced and executed in 1483. His ally, the powerful Wan Kuei, died four years later, to the intense grief of Hsien Tsung. Indeed, he never got over her loss and pined away and died only eight months afterwards.

He had caused the Great Wall to be repaired and its garrisons to be strengthened; the Imperial Canal to be deepened, Hami to be won back to Chinese suzerainty; he befriended the great impressionist painter Wu Wei; he had exquisite porcelain made, cups and bowls and dishes decorated in five colours with grape vines, with plants and grasshoppers, with hens and chickens, with figures and lotuses; for which substantial merits his demerits may well be forgotten.

Again an inexperienced youth, his son Hsiao Tsung, came to the throne. He was only seventeen, but acquitted himself admirably of his difficult task, consistently backing his capable and upright minister, Ma Wên chêng, in the perennial struggle between honesty and corruption.

Ma Wên chêng in his previous career had by bitter personal experiences with Wang Chih thoroughly learnt all the tricks and resources of the forces of evil. Utterly fearless and sure of the Emperor's support, he now seized them by the throat, dismissed superfluous, incompetent and irregularly appointed officials, civil and military, cleansed the administration of the public granaries, destroyed the books of Taoist magic collected by Hsien Tsung and generally swept hidden recesses of Court and administration so energetically with the broom of reform, grafters, intriguers, profiteers and their swarm of parasites, chivied away from their wonted pickings, swore revenge.

His life was in danger. But Hsiao Tsung stood firm and provided him with a reliable bodyguard.

Hsiao Tsung's natural affinity to the powers of light also showed itself in other ways. He rebuilt and considerably enlarged K'ung Tzŭ's mortuary Temple, and did much to foster that brilliant flowering of art which, beginning with Shên Chou, then already an old man at the height of his renown, was to last

throughout the sixteenth century, carried on by the now world-famous masters Lin Liang, T'ang Yin, Wên Chêng ming, Ch'iu Ying, Lü Chi. The latter, commander of the Imperial guard, enjoyed Hsiao Tsung's personal friendship, because his pictures of birds, trees and flowers "were so full of life, a divine hand seemed to have touched them," and conveyed that other message of natural beauty, gratitude to the eternally Creative and appreciation of the moral beauty it demands.

Another artist painted the Emperor's portrait, as customary in all the unmitigated sincerity of complete full face, a gorgeous dragon screen behind the throne, the Imperial robes spread round him with an Elizabethan amplitude revealing the wealth, the unquestioned and unquestioning pride in display of a stable, well-fed and contented world.

It was, however, to be rudely shaken out of its placid enjoyment by Hsiao Tsung's son and successor, Wu Tsung.

He was only fourteen when his father's premature death placed him on the throne. He, too, has been painted with robes spread wide, the hands lost in voluminous, magnificently embroidered sleeves. His face is long and narrow and differs considerably from the usual Ming type, as might be expected from his erratic temperament, self-opinionated and self-willed, scornful of either precedents or consequences. He had gifts—a talent for languages (he learnt Tibetan, Mongol and Arabic); he possessed energy, courage, and a mind of his own.

Yet he achieved nothing, because the powers of evil incarnated in the eunuch Liu Chin and his gang, only repressed by Ma Wên shêng, not annihilated, were determined to prevent the young prince from developing into the firm, high-principled Emperor who would continue his father's policy possibly even more vigorously. With deadly cunning they sapped his self-control, fed his animal appetites, weakened his vitality, diverted his energy from attendance to duties to pursuit of pleasure and turned a gifted youth into a vicious, half-crazed voluptuary. That he is the only one of the sixteen Ming Emperors afflicted with the madness peculiar to over-indulged despots, shows how greatly the Son of Heaven, so often depicted as a complete autocrat, was really hemmed in. An intricate apparatus of delicately adjusted curbs, precedent, form, family-law, filial piety, Dowagers, Councillors, Censors, religious observances, and last but not least the unofficial but formidable power of the servant, effectively prevented him from fancying himself a demi-god who could do whatever he liked.

Indeed, the government was suffering not from an excess, but from a lack of power, directly exercised by the Emperor. A



tendency had arisen of making him a round-eyed idol immobilized in a golden shrine and only shown the prostrate populace on very great days from behind dense clouds of incense. That Wu Tsung broke through that growing custom and insisted on moving about freely throughout the whole country is entirely to his credit, and if he had used his freedom judiciously, for inspecting the administration and leading his soldiers to battle, sharing their hardships and dangers as his great ancestors had done, he would have set up an example which could not have failed to revitalize the dynasty for generations.

As it was, his civilian excursions ended in outrageous love adventures, while the military ones merely added to the trials and embarrassments of his generals. Yet even this would not have mattered if he had not placed the whole weight of his authority on the side of tyranny and extortion, because his wilfulness and vanity flared up at the slightest show of opposition and his extravagance and that of his Court devoured untold sums of money, which only eunuchs knew how to find.

Liu Chin and his seven co-Tigers, whom no sense of honour kept back from the most mendacious servility, purred mellifluously round the feet of their Imperial master, while behind his back their claws and fangs cruelly lacerated the flesh of his defenceless people.

It was an age of big proportions and violent contrasts. Both in their vices and their virtues men went to extremes and Wu Tsung's Court bred infamous blackguards like Liu Chin and Chiang Pin, and attracted lights of such brilliancy as Yang T'ing-ho and Wang Shou-jên, best known as Wang Yang ming. These and others of their way of thinking put up a long and valiant fight against iniquity, for which they cannot be praised too highly, since life in high places was exceedingly dangerous and the minimum penalty of failure was the bamboo and exile to remote malarial districts. As to the maximum penalty, it meant prison, torture, dismemberment and disgrace in this world and the next, besides the death of the supposed culprit's entire family.

Wang Shou-jên, daring to make a stand against Liu Chin's corruption, was fortunate in being let off with the lighter punishment. He was sent into the official banishment of a small post in Kueichou, where, practising his own philosophy, he avoided home-sickness by inculcating the rudiments of civilization into the natives.

Other opponents of Liu Chin fared worse. The Emperor in his youth and purblind confidence in that sinister creature, had decreed that all memorials and petitions were to be first

sent to his favourite. But one day an anonymous memorial containing the most serious charges against him was dropped on the floor of the audience hall. Wu Tsung tried in vain to discover its author.

Then in a rage he ordered 300 high officials among whom he felt sure the offender was to be found, to kneel in the courtyard in front of the palace till they revealed his identity. They never did. For five days and five nights they knelt there. Many fainted ; some died, but they would not betray their comrade. Finally, the Emperor had to give way and let them go home, and though he himself trusted Liu Chin more implicitly than ever, this magnificent example of passive resistance had drawn attention to the eunuch's misdeeds. Two years later, the general Yang I-ch'ing, of whom he had made a deadly enemy by getting him imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of embezzlement, conspired with the rival eunuch Yang Chung to impeach him. Yang I-ch'ing had been found indispensable for putting down serious rebellions in several south-western provinces provoked by the exactions of the eight Tigers and encouraged by an uncle of Wu Tsung's, Prince An hua.

He beat the rebels, but on his return to Peking with all the prestige of a victorious general and still under the protection of his troops, he made the Emperor understand more and graver rebellions would shake his throne, if Liu Chin continued in power. Whereupon Wu Tsung decreed his banishment. But when a search in his house revealed a quantity of false seals and tallies, of belts and robes reserved for Emperors and two daggers hidden in the fan he habitually carried when in attendance on His Majesty, the latter suddenly realized the depth of the precipice along which he had been sauntering and at once ordered Liu Chin's execution. The populace tore and bit the corpse to pieces.

For a while a better atmosphere prevailed at Court. Yang T'ing-ho was consulted more frequently, Wang Shou-jên recalled from exile and entrusted with high posts. But Wu Tsung could not keep serious long. The dissolute Chiang Pin came into favour, reckless spending and exactions were once more the order of the day.

The resulting dissatisfaction induced Ch'en hao, Prince of Ning, to rise up in arms against his relative. In 1519 he proclaimed himself Emperor and threatened Nanking. But Wang Shou-jên beat him so thoroughly, he was taken prisoner and put to death.

Wu Tsung, however, claimed the honour of this victory for himself and ordered a mandate to be drawn up in which he



appointed himself Commander-in-chief. Yang T'ing-ho got into very hot water for refusing to have anything to do with such nonsense. A year later Wu Tsung quite literally fell into such cold water while out boating on a lake in one of his eunuchs' private residences, he contracted a chill which seems to have turned into consumption. During the winter solstice celebration in the Temple of Heaven he had a violent fit of blood-spitting. By the end of April he lay dead in his coffin, having only lived thirty-one years.

Wu Tsung left no son, which made the question of the succession an anxious one, filling many princely breasts with fearful palpitations of alternating hopes and disappointments. His mother, the Dowager-Empress Chang, decided or was induced by Yang T'ing-ho to decide in favour of a grandson of Hsien Tsung's and first cousin to Wu Tsung, whose father, Yin Yüan, Prince of Hsing in Hupeh, was already dead, while his grandmother, the Lady Shao, a concubine of Hsien Tsung's, was still in the palace. To judge by her portrait, she was a pleasant old lady, but the unexpected honour, suddenly pouring in upon her (her grandson created her Empress-Dowager), overtaxed her strength. She died the following year and was given the crowning honour of an Imperial burial in Hsien Tsung's tomb, the Mausoleum of Prosperity.

The question of this burial unfortunately started the first serious difference of opinion between Yang T'ing-ho and the new Emperor Shih Tsung, best known by his reign name Chia Ching.

The peace of Hsien Tsung's sepulchre had already been broken once before in 1518 to admit his Empress's coffin. Now the Grand Secretary, in concert with others, declared "works should not so often be undertaken there, as it frightened and disturbed the manes." But the Emperor being young (only fourteen) and headstrong would not listen and the deceased old lady was duly buried with her lord.

It was worse that in more serious matters also he seldom followed the experienced minister's advice, though he owed his peaceful accession entirely to his able handling of affairs during the six weeks it took for messengers to reach Hupeh and bring the young prince to Peking.

As a first precautionary measure Yang T'ing-ho had Chiang Pin decoyed into the Palace, seized and slain. The 2,000 chests of silver and the seventy of gold found in his house were confiscated and the danger of their being used to finance rebellion happily averted.

Next came the disbandment of useless armies and the dis-

missal of swarms of parasitic priests, a step which may have been taken not only for the sake of economy but in retaliation of the snub inflicted on Wu Tsung when he sent an embassy to Tibet in 1515 inviting the Second Incarnation of Avalokita, the successor of Tsong-kha-pa's nephew, the Grand Lama Ge dun Dshamtso, to Peking. The holy man declined to come and as the embassy was heavily armed, took offence at it and had it kicked out with bruised shins and blackened eyes. It may have been a further result of the resentment this occasioned, combined with a tendency towards a consciously national reaction against foreign influences, that Chia Ching completely diverted Imperial favour from Buddhists to Taoist priests.

Buddhist shrines in the Purple City were destroyed; a number of Buddhist images melted down, Taoist deities taking possession of their altars. It was a pity the Taoists misused this sudden spell of sunshine for beguiling their benefactor's credulity with the old but imperishable fable of a drug of immortality. Like most of the latter Mings, Chia Ching was often ailing and consequently prone to believe in fantastic remedies. But some of these herbal decoctions given him by Taoist priests must have been good, for he reached sixty, quite a venerable age in his short-lived family.

His reign of forty-five years is the second longest of the dynasty and its point of culmination marked as such points mostly are by strenuous building.

Some of the finest monuments left by the Mings, like the superb Temple to the glorious Virtues and lofty Holiness of ancient sovereigns and sages, the Ti Wang Miao, the Altar to the Spirits of the Sun, of the Moon, of the Earth and of Husbandry, the incomparable marble Gate at the entrance of the Spirit Way leading to the Imperial sepulchres, were erected by Chia Ching. For his own sepulchre, the eternal Tomb, the Yung Ling, he reverted to the grand proportions chosen by Yung Lo and given up since. Nothing less would have been in keeping with the spirit of his reign, animated by an exuberant productivity in all arts and crafts and that in spite of shrinkage on the far western frontiers, Japanese piracies on the eastern, Mongol razzias on the northern ones. To meet the latter, extensive repairs were carried out on the ramparts of Peking and the southern suburb began to be protected by walls of its own.

All these multitudinous building activities kept the kilns busy and the bricks, on which the master potters proudly stamped their name, were of the very best quality.

The potters of Ching Tê Chên also turned out quantities of excellent work, especially in Mahommedan blue and five-colour





MING EMPRESS HSIEN TSUNG (+ 1518)

EMPRESS DOWAGER UNDER HSAIO TSUNG. BURIED IN MAO LING





decoration. Apart from the steadily growing foreign demand, the needs of the Court prevented any risk of unemployment. For one year (1544) the list of Palace orders included 1,340 sets of twenty-seven pieces for the dinner table, for another year (1554) 6,900 wine-cups, 28,800 tea-cups, 30,500 plates, 36,550 bowls, 680 large fish bowls costing forty taels each.

In the same reign choice specimens of the earlier Ming porcelains fetched enormous prices and were eagerly sought by connoisseurs. At the great annual fair in the Pao Kuo Temple twenty taels would be paid for an old pencil rest; 100 for a persimmon-shaped rouge-box; 1,000 for an incense bowl decorated with precious ruby red. Such prices, recorded by the most famous of Ming collectors, the artist Hsiang Yüan pien, in his self-illustrated "Description of Celebrated Porcelains," go to show that neither the Japanese pirate raids, though they penetrated some way up to the Yangtze, nor the aggression of the Mongols, though under Altan's bold leadership they once pushed within a few miles of Peking, loomed quite as large in contemporary life as they do in the historians' chronicles, as eager to record calamities as the most lurid evening rag.

They were neither so uncommon nor so extensive as to disturb the daily routine of any but the actually affected, a small minority in a country of the size and wealth of Chia Ching's empire.

The frontier troops were armed with cannons cast in copper on a model obtained from the Portuguese, walls were strengthened, armies increased, unsuccessful generals bamboozed to death, successful ones rewarded; otherwise no special effort was made or called for.

Home politics were preserved from monotony by the usual wranglings between humane ministers defending the rights and needs of the governed, and harsh ones stressing the duty of the administration to maintain law and order.

Among the latter, Yen Sung earned for himself the unenviable distinction of being called the chief of the six wicked Ming ministers. He died in disgrace and poverty.

Among the former, Hsia Yen won popularity for his fearless stand against corruption and was at one time honoured as the Pillar of the State. Nevertheless, Yen Sung's powerful enmity caused him to be tried on a trumped-up charge of bribery for which he was executed.

Ch'ou Luan, also hated by Yen Sung, escaped execution only by dying before his trial. The beheading was therefore performed on his corpse, one of those brutal measures which made Yen Sung so unpopular. It was wholly unjustified, for

Ch'ou Luan's only crime was that the horse fairs he had advocated as a means of establishing friendly relations with the frontier Mongols had not proved an unqualified success.

Yang Shên, Yang T'ing-ho's accomplished son, was banished, Yang T'ing-ho himself dismissed for excess of probity. In spite of such blemishes and allowing for an absence of perfection not infrequent elsewhere, the work of government and the life of the nation went on smoothly and happily under the long rule of Chia Ching. And when in the winter of 1567 he was laid to rest in the silence of his magnificent tomb, he left his son Mu Tsung a state that functioned so well it was able to inflict a decisive defeat on the Mongols and conclude a mutually advantageous peace with them, which lasted over twenty years.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE LATER MINGS

**I**T must, however, be admitted that Chinese political power was only one of the factors which made this peace possible. The spiritual strength of Tibetan Lamaism supplied the other.

The enthusiastic support given it by Kublai Khan and the following Yüan Emperors, had apparently done little to spread the faith among the Mongols in their home lands, and when all of them were driven back there, the native Gods reasserted their old attraction. Buddhism dropped out of fashion. But now that visions of a possible renewal of Jenghis Khan's Empire began to haunt Altan's brain, the need for adhesion to a world religion immediately arose.

Legend has it that one evening while trying to cure an attack of gout by steeping his feet in the warm bowels of an unfortunate slave whose belly had been ripped open for the purpose, an apparition white against the silvery blue of a full-moon sky, had upbraided him for the heinous sin he was committing. Some Tibetan Lama monks, whom he had captured on his last raid into their country, interpreted the apparition as that of the All Merciful's reincarnation in their own Great Lama. Whereupon Altan, like the famous Mongol leaders three centuries before, sent an embassy to this holy dignitary inviting him to stoop down to the Mongols and kindle the light of his miraculous religion among them. He came.

Immense celebrations took place in his honour on the shores of the Blue Lake, for he obviously was Buddha Incarnate. Had he not four arms, two of which always remained prayerfully folded on his breast, and did not his horse's hoofs leave the imprint of the sacred four words "Om mani padme hum" wherever they touched the ground? The fully converted Altan bestowed the title of "Diamond sceptred Priest of Oceanic Profundity" on the Lama, who in return called Altan the "World Monarch turning a thousand Wheels of Gold," an appellation which implied that Mongol warriors would always

be ready to defend Tibetan ecclesiastics. The Mongols also vowed to observe Buddha's law of mercy and did actually give up slaughtering victims at funerals.

For years they were so engrossed with the building of monasteries and the worship of their new and wonderful Gods, the hope expressed at the Blue Lake meeting by one of the most eloquent speakers, that "the river of blood foaming in mountainous waves would be transformed into a deep calm sea of milk" came fairly near fulfilment. The spiritual union thus happily re-established between the Tibetan mountain dwellers and the Mongol nomads of the plains has not been broken yet. It roused Chia Ching's grandson, the Emperor Wan Li, into seeking the Great Lama's friendship by conferring on him the same superlative title with which Kublai Khan had honoured his distant predecessor, Pagspa. This was one of the few wise measures which stand to Wan Li's credit. It is under him that the downward slide of the Mings first really begins.

Under his father Mu Tsung, surrounded by able ministers like Kao Kung and Chang Chü chêng and himself a grown man of considerable judgment, there was still a sufficiency of courage, intelligence and probity to make good the mistakes and disasters due to cowardice, folly and corruption, which is as much as can be expected anywhere in ordinary times. But under Wan Li the balance between efficiency and inefficiency tipped more and more in favour of the latter, infecting all classes with the curse of moral torpor and the blight of mental aridity.

Consequently the majority turned a deaf ear on Wang Shou-jên's appeal for a return to the inwardness preached by the old sages; for the appreciation of intuitive knowledge based on the principle that a pure heart is the only accurate mirror of the universe, and consciously opposed to the excessive dependence on external standards of learning and conduct, which was clogging the flow of natural inspiration. Like all great thinkers, he was a herald of the future rather than an active influence in his own century, to which academic correctness and the solemn taboo against spontaneity proclaimed by the pompous Tung Chi ch'iang was far more congenial.

This celebrity scintillating in the glory of Court and public admiration uninterruptedly from Wan Li to Ch'ung Chêng, was considered an infallible paragon as a connoisseur, as a collector, as an art critic, as a painter, as a calligraphist, as a statesman. His idea of painting was that it "must begin and end with the familiar" and "that it was rank heresy to imagine" an artist "was free to make his own style in tree painting." For each



variety of tree he recommended a special Sung or T'ang artist as the only acceptable model, and as a matter of prime importance he decreed that every landscape must include "a few withered trees"—"as a foil to the healthy ones." The result of slavish obedience to such advice was that the withered from being a fashionable fancy in laboriously compiled landscapes spread into every department of life.

The love of the immediate and tangible no longer redeemed by zest of discovery and delight in novelty was fossilizing into a soulless repetition of hearsay formulas. Large-viewed, rich-blooded men were not borne to the fore by the high tide of general approval. Small men got there instead, while the multitude slouched dully through its allotted round of tasks. Difficulties formerly easily met, diseases and defects once lightly borne now started to fester and spread a paralysing poison into vital organs of the state.

Coming to the throne under such conditions and as a mere child of ten, Wan Li can hardly be blamed for not developing into the super-man who alone could have overcome the all-pervading lassitude. He began as a gentle, warm-hearted boy greatly in awe of the Regent Dowager-Empress, and for years content to leave the serious work of government in the hands of his father's ministers, Kao Kung and Chang Chü-chêng. Though friction developed between them, and Chang Chü-chêng contrived to oust his rival, he proved a capable administrator. During his tenure of office the country was so prosperous with 106 million acres of arable land, peace on the frontiers and a full treasury, that seven years' arrears of taxes could safely be remitted.

Ching Tê Chên worked at high pressure to keep pace with the demand for its beautiful wares. In the sweat of the potters' brow quantities of large fish bowls were produced as well as all kinds of fantastic novelties like hat-boxes, chess-boards and pricket candlesticks. In 1583 the Palace orders, reaching a total of 96,000 items, were at the instance of a watchful Censor cut down by half, which must have caused much angry comment in the back-apartments of the Palace.

This year of 1583 was a bad one for the dynasty, though no one knew or could have known it at the time how black a fate it was preparing, since the event which started the train of momentous consequences was too insignificant in itself to attract contemporary attention.

In one of the petty wars frequent among the Tungusic clans, settled in the semi-civilized immensity beyond the eastern end of the Great Wall, the commander of a Chinese garrison had

assisted one chieftain against another, helping him to victory. Among the defeated and slain there happened to be the head of the Manchu, the "pure Clan," and his son, father of Nurhachu, then twenty-four years old, on whom the headship now devolved. He swore undying hatred and revenge and the keeping of that vow was to prove the most active factor in the downfall of the Mings.

1583 was also the year immediately following Chang Chü chêng's death. Like many able but autocratic statesmen, he had omitted to train any successor, with the result that the young Emperor had only a collection of spineless nonentities to choose from for the filling of the highest posts. Unfortunately this exactly suited him or rather the group of self-seeking intriguers, eunuchs, concubines, their relatives and sycophants who monopolized his favour and succeeded in eliminating any influence but their own. Yet he had been brought up carefully and every day sitting on his throne, he could read on twelve scrolls hung up around it, that flatterers and favourites were to be avoided and obedience to the warnings of Heaven and the dictates of conscience, moderation, self-restraint, sobriety, dignity, economy, justice, and acceptance of honest advice were the proper virtues for a Son of Heaven to cultivate. Theoretically he fully agreed, and from time to time pulled himself together sufficiently to practise at least some of them. But never for very long.

Surrounded by those who being evil themselves had a distinct interest in decoying him into drunkenness and debauchery, he soon degenerated into a bad-tempered voluptuary, whom a painfully honest artist has depicted sitting in an undignified heap on a plain throne, weak-mouthed, fat-faced, discontented. An equally honest judge, Lo Yu jan, had the courage to remonstrate with him about his licentiousness, rapacity and uncontrolled temper. The honest advice nearly cost Lo Yu jan his life; and of course it was not followed. In the highly centralized government left by Chang Chü-chêng, the neglect of public affairs by the Emperor and the corruption of powerful flunkies soon produced such dislocation in the state machinery that the conquest of the Ming Empire from an ideal dream of Mongol chieftains looking backwards, became a question of practical politics for other ambitious neighbours looking forwards, the Manchus and the Japanese.

The latter under the stirring leadership of Hideyoshi were the first to open hostilities with this conquest as the seriously chosen objective. Hideyoshi was a military genius to whom political unrest had given the chance of seizing control. Well



informed through his countrymen's piracies of the weak state of China's coast defences, he resolved to prevent the bellicose temper of Japanese man-power from devouring itself by letting it loose on the continent.

The annexation of Korea was to be the stepping-stone for that of China. At midnight on the thirteenth day of the fourth moon, 1592, he landed his army of 241,500 men armed with guns at Fu San. The Korean garrison only had arrows; so the town was soon taken, and the Japanese invasion rolled in a triumphant flood northwards as far as Ping Yang, seizing the capital, driving the King into terrified flight to the banks of the Yalu. There he recovered breath and as both he and his people dreaded the thought of changing the mild overlordship of China for Hideyoshi's iron grip, he appealed to Wan Li for help. Which was sent.

The first Chinese detachment was beaten; the second under Yi Yu sung compelled the Japanese to evacuate Ping Yang early in 1593.

There followed years of bitter fighting interlarded with spells of truce for negotiating acceptable peace terms. But Hideyoshi, standing fiercely on his new dignity, which in his overheated imagination could be second to none, was not easy to deal with. So all peace talk ended in a resumption of war.

Korea was terribly devastated; the population of the capital massacred, the palace burnt. At one battle, in which the Chinese were beaten, the victors cut off the noses and ears of 38,700 heads, pickled them and sent them home as glorious trophies to rejoice the heart of Hideyoshi.

Nevertheless, that would-be conqueror began to realize that the swift, easy conquest he had expected and which was all his imperfectly consolidated state could achieve was terribly elusive. There was a tenacity in Korean resistance, a weight in that of their Chinese allies which was wearing out his resources. He fell sick and died in September, 1598.

The resulting internal difficulties hastened Japanese evacuation. In the peace officially only concluded in 1615, though practically observed long before, Korea got off with promise of payment of a small tribute and the cession of Fu San.

In 1638 the Japanese demanded an increase in the tribute, but by then Nurhachu's vow bequeathed to his son had on its road to fulfilment drawn Korea into the orbit of Manchu power, a very real thing, not to be trifled with.

So Japan abstained from insisting on its demands.

Wan Li was spared the sorrow of seeing this important

bulwark of Chinese prestige pass into enemy hands, as he died in 1620. But there was no lack of other trials.

The very year which marked the beginning of the Sino Korean-Japanese war also brought war and desolation to the western end of the northern borders, to Shansi, where the Mongol Po pai, whose previous loyalty had been rewarded with the rank, power and emoluments of a Chinese general, revolted. Personal jealousies and obtuse unfriendliness had long caused friction between him and the governor of the province, who finally went so far as to get Po pai's son bamboosed. This indignity enkindled an angry flare-up among all the border troops. Po pai seized several fortified towns, but within a few months was driven to bay in Ning Hua on the Huang Ho.

His defence was so brilliant, the besieging Imperialists had to call in the assistance of the river. They dammed it up so that its waters, piled in foaming eddies against the city walls, washed away their foundations. They collapsed ; and with Po pai's suicide the revolt ended.

Not so its remembrance which lingered on and growing, disgusted many Mongols with the Mings, and eventually tempted them to join hands with their enemy Nurhachu.

In 1600 there were troubles in Szechuan, stirred up by raiding Tibetans. These, too, were overcome and Wan Li, fancying the "all clear" could now be sounded, returned to his favourite amusement of spending money.

The surplus accumulated by Chang Chü-chêng's able administration had long dwindled into a deficit. Various expedients were tried as a remedy ; mines opened ; extra taxes levied ; rent collected from the Portuguese settled at Macao since the last years of Chia Ching.

These enterprising navigators, combining commercial, missionary and pirate activities, pious and brutal, conceited and bold, had conquered Malacca in 1511, destroyed mosques to build fortresses and terrified many Arab, Indian and Chinese vessels off the Indian Ocean, sometimes even off the southern waters of the Yellow Sea. Already, in 1520, they had tried to get into direct touch with the Court of China. But Wu Tsung's death, which occurred while the Portuguese envoy Pirez was in Peking, stopped the negotiations.

Another reason for this was that the arrogant tone of the King of Portugal's letter had caused great offence and that news of the lawless behaviour of his subjects near Canton had been received in the capital. In the pride of their heavily armed galleons they were playing the master on an island they had coolly appropriated in the Si Kiang estuary, levying tolls on the



shipping, setting up a tribunal, declining to pay any taxes to the legitimate masters, the Chinese, and even thrashing a mildly protesting Cantonese official.

Pirez was therefore escorted back to Canton. And the Portuguese there, refusing to obey an order for their immediate departure, he and several others were cast into prison. Some of their vessels were set on fire, the remainder fled full sail to Malacca.

But the profits realized by the trade with China were too tempting. Only a few years later the irrepressible Portuguese had by intimidation and bribery acquired a footing in a part of Chekiang near Ningpo, another in Fukien near Amoy. For a time they prospered, but though their own great Albuquerque had said a Chinese junk man knew more about courtesy and humanity than a European knight, they treated the native population so abominably they won the unenviable epithet of foreign devils.

At last when they suddenly swooped down on a village looting, burning, murdering, Chinese patience came to an equally sudden end. Both settlements, the Chekiang one in 1545, the other in 1543, were wiped out. This seems to have taught the Portuguese a lesson.

Their next settlement, Macao, was according to the most trustworthy accounts acquired honestly in 1557 as a reward for valuable assistance given the Canton authorities against pirates, that chronic plague along those shores. In 1575 the Chinese cut Macao off from the mainland by a solid wall. But the wall had a gate and on the whole with the collecting of customs and harbour dues by both the Chinese and Portuguese authorities and since 1582 the payment by the latter of a ground rent of 500 silver taels a year, relations became quite friendly and Portuguese skill in the making and handling of cannons was frequently made use of by the Ming Court during the troubles which were to end it.

It was via Macao that the Jesuit missionaries first penetrated into China. Their most remarkable pioneer, Matteo Ricci, even got as far as Peking in 1601, and thanks to his ingratiating manners and the curiosity aroused by the clocks, globes, maps and engravings he brought with him, he found favour in the eyes of several men of high position. The Emperor himself graciously allowed him a house and maintenance. The Board of Rites, however, looked askance on the intruder, criticizing some of the presents he brought, "for instance pictures of the Lord of Heaven and his Mother, also bones of the transfigured. As if those ascending to Heaven needed bones! Han Yü of the

T'angs said such unclean things can only bring ill luck and should therefore be kept out of the Palace." "Let him be given a cap and belt and sent away to Kiang Si."

But Wan Li, impressed by Ricci's learning, especially in astronomy, kept him and he peacefully ended his days in Peking, dying in 1610.

While he was preaching a western version of the religion of mercy and incidentally abusing its eastern Buddhist manifestation, his Spanish co-religionists, who had seized the Luzon Islands in 1571, renaming them Philippines in honour of their King, massacred 20,000 to 30,000 Chinese earning an honest living there, as a precautionary measure against a possible attack on their own strongly fortified quarters. This happened in 1603 and was repeated twice during the same century, the Ming government being then both too weak and too pre-occupied with more urgent difficulties to do more than issue paper protests.

In 1616, Nurhachu, still mindful of his vow and having partly by force, partly by the attraction of an even, clean and strong-handed government, united all the old Nüchên tribes except that of Yeho, and absorbed a few Mongolian ones as well, and chosen Tien ming (Heavenly Mandate) for his reign name, proclaimed himself "Gloriously Radiant Sovereign Lord, protecting and nourishing all nations." This was more than the assumption of a title: it was a programme and a challenge.

The following year, to make his meaning quite clear, he wrote out a document of seven dire grievances against the Mings, which, while offering sacrifice to Heaven, he solemnly burnt, that they might reach the seat of eternal Justice on high. The most serious of these seven grounds of "undying hatred" were the crossing of the Ching River by Chinese soldiers to assist Nurhachu's great enemy Yeho; their crossing another river to drive away Manchu reapers from the lands they had tilled for generations; above all, the terrible injury they had inflicted on his ancestors though "they had never taken a straw or an inch of soil within the Chinese pale."

War, for which he had been carefully preparing, followed at once. In 1619 he seized the frontier fortress of Fushun; in the same month of the following year Shen Yang (the modern Mukden), shortly afterwards Liao Yang.

Thereupon seventy towns and boroughs in Liao Tung submitted to his rule, for between the capture of Fushun and Shen Yang, he had with his numerically greatly inferior forces of 60,000 men, inflicted a crushing defeat on a Chinese army of



200,000 in a five days' battle round the hills of Sarhu and Shan Yen, and that in spite of the Chinese possessing guns.

Possibly the news of this disaster, in which 45,000 soldiers and 300 officers lost their lives and the prestige of the Ming Empire was seriously tarnished, hastened Wan Li's death.

Previously, in 1615, he had been roughly shaken from lazy acquiescence in eunuch mismanagement by an attempt on the life of his eldest son, the Prince Imperial Ch'ang Lo. It was engineered by his favourite concubine, the Lady Chêng, and her group of satellites for the sake of diverting the succession to her own son, Prince Fu. The Emperor was so perturbed he screwed himself up to holding a public audience, a thing he had not done for years. There, taking the Prince Imperial's hand, he declared his affection for him and upbraided those who tried to sow discord between them. The hired assassin was beheaded; the real culprit pardoned, with deplorable results.

For when in the late summer of 1620 Wan Li vanished from the world he had benefited so little and found a safe refuge from the many troubles, he left his successor in the great vault of the Ting Ling, the last of the Ming Tombs built with Imperial magnificence, the Lady Chêng and her crew resumed their nefarious schemes with increased zest. And this time they succeeded.

Ch'ang lo, known as the Emperor Kuang Tsung, was thirty-nine when he came to the throne, a man of judgment, energy and experience, determined to rid the palace of the corruption which Wan Li's weakness had allowed to grow so rampant. Honest men like the Censor Yang Lien began to breathe more freely; hope of genuine reform was in the air. That proved Kuang Tsung's undoing. Subversion of every principle of sound government had gone so far, honesty had become the sure road to prison, torture, death, knavishness the acknowledged ladder to honour, wealth and power. Indeed, demoralization had reached such a pass it was unsafe for the highest in the land to set his face against the hidden workers of iniquity. Though full of the most venomous mutual jealousies and animosities among themselves, they would band together at the first sign of their stranglehold on authority being threatened.

With his previous experience of their methods the new Emperor sought to win some outside support for the Crown and distributed money among the soldiers.

Forthwith he fell ill of a mysterious complaint. At first secretly by poisoning his food, soon almost openly with violent purgatives and red pills, the attendant eunuchs showed what

they thought of a ruler bent on reform. He was removed to a better world, after having reigned only six weeks.

There can be little doubt that his sons, the last two Ming Emperors in Peking, were haunted by a secret dread of sharing his fate, should they attempt to stand up against the powerful gang which had sent him to his grave.

Certainly the eldest, his successor Hsi Tsung, clung to the head eunuch Wei Chung-hsien with a tenacity indicating a childlike desire for protection against the rest of the gang. The second, Ch'ung chêng, though he freed the palace of that arch villain, could never summon up courage to seek better supporters of the throne than these eunuch servants inflated into dangerous and domineering masters.

With Kuang Tsung the last hope of righting the accumulated mistakes of Wan Li's reign passed away, for both his sons, probably suffering as sensitive children would from the mephitic atmosphere of envy, intrigue, treachery and immorality permeating their grandfather's court, had grown up nervous, peevish, irresolute, without either physical or mental stamina.

Hsi Tsung especially was a weak, sickly, undersized youth of fifteen with no qualification whatever beyond the accident of birth for the post of vast responsibilities and real danger to which he was suddenly called.

Instinctively he shirked both and throughout the seven years of his reign hid behind the pretty skirts of his foster-mother, the Lady K'o, and the gorgeous robes of his head eunuch, Wei Chung-hsien. Keeping the young Emperor either busy with his carpentering, of which he was boyishly fond, or amused in all manner of vicious ways, these two, working together, obtained an unshakable ascendancy over what little mind he possessed. Infatuated with both, he gladly placed the whole tiresome business of government into their hands, believing them to be capable and clean. But in reality they were unspeakably callous, cruel and rapacious.

Wei Chung-hsien's foxy brain only contained two ideas: how to enlarge and maintain his power to the utmost and how to enrich himself and his gang as much and as fast as possible. On the good of the state he never wasted a moment's thought. As he exercised his oppressive, inefficient despotism under cover of Imperial authority, the last reserves of popularity enjoyed by the Mings were torn to unpatchable rags. With admirable courage Yang Lien presented a memorial eloquently and emphatically warning Hsi Tsung of the dangers to which that miscreant's tyranny was exposing the dynasty. Among many other fully substantiated charges he accused him of filling



“ official posts with youths still smelling of their mother’s milk or with illiterate members of his own family ” ; also of having turned the “ Eastern Court ” once established for protecting the Throne from treason into a deadly machine for the removal of rivals by general proscription.

“ He keeps a box there into which anonymous accusations may be dropped and traps are set night and day to betray those who oppose him. Let but a word be whispered against his doings and forthwith a warrant is issued and the offender is dragged to trial at the Eastern Court.”

“ He has inflicted humiliating punishment on the fathers of Imperial concubines and beheaded their servants by scores. He has done his best to ruin the Emperor’s father and to shake even Her Majesty’s position.”

“ Eunuchs are forbidden to form bands of soldiers as bodyguards to the Sovereign, but Wei Chung-hsien has surrounded himself with armed men and gathered a troop of his own creatures who are drilled in the Palace. Dangerous and desperate characters naturally flock to it. What is to prevent an assassin being found among them to attempt Your Majesty’s life ? ”

Nevertheless, “ each day sees him rejoicing in fresh honours ; shrines are built at which he a living man is to be worshipped. Conferring distinctions on such a being defiles the words of the Emperor. . . . ” “ Why nourish a tiger to work his evil will at your very elbows ? ”

“ The tale of his crimes and treasonable designs is blazoned abroad in all men’s eyes ; yet none of your courtiers dare speak against him lest they incur doom. Their tongues are tied ” ; for “ should any have the courage to reveal Wei’s treasons, the Lady K’o stands at Your Majesty’s side to gloss over his guilt. These two are sworn allies. If one calls, the other comes to the rescue. Humbly I implore Your Majesty now to display the might of Your high displeasure and to appoint a commission of the ablest nobles and highest officials with power to subject Wei to searching examination, that the law of the land may be upheld. Also I beg to have the Lady K’o removed from the Forbidden City in order to guard you from further danger. Then, though your servant die, yet shall he live.”

But Hsi Tsung, intent only on lathe and saw and his latest concubine, allowed the “ might of his high displeasure ” to be turned against his loyal friends, not against his secret foes.

Probably at Lady K’o’s suggestion, he issued two edicts, one declaring Wei Chung-hsien’s services to be wholly indispensable, the other damning Yang Lien for gross impertinence. Never-

theless, inspired by Yang Lien's example, three other patriots courageously added their warnings to his; one, a Censor, asked:

"Can Your Majesty employ as your most trusted agent a creature whose flesh the whole empire desires to eat?"

Another declared:

"The peril of our state makes my blood run cold. Those who surround the Throne are tools and creatures of Wei Chung-hsien and K'o, no true servants of Your Majesty; who is become like unto an orphan in a friendless world."

The third, Wan Ching, secretary to the Board in charge of the Imperial sepulchres, wrote:

"This Wei is practically become Emperor and the fountain of all honour; his friends secure well-feathered nests while the bodies of his enemies are covered with boils and sores."

"On his own tomb he has spent a million taels, while His late Majesty's mausoleum is denied necessary fittings. Your existence is ignored; Wei Chung-hsien fills men's minds."

Such a downpour of unpalatable truths was more than the accused could stand. Sure of the Emperor's backing, he turned on his enemies and literally rent them to pieces.

Wan Ching was beaten and kicked, the other, including Yang Lien, slowly and diabolically tortured to death.

Yang Lien's arrest had already seriously alarmed the scholarly class to which he belonged and which was the moulder and final arbiter of public opinion. His horrible death alienated it completely from a dynasty capable of permitting such abominations, and helps to account for the lukewarmness and total absence of intelligent co-operation in the resistance offered by the people in general to the enemies of the Mings, even where these enemies happened to be the dreaded and detested aliens from beyond the Great Wall.

After their victories under Wan Li these kept on steadily gaining ground. In 1625 their mighty leader Nurhachu, having brought the last recalcitrant tribe, the Yehos, to heel, set up his residence in Shen Yang, henceforth called Mukden, the City of Prosperity. This marks the second big step in the Manchus' rise to power because the strategic position of the new capital, equidistant from Korea, Mongolia and Chinese territory across the Liao, was of the utmost value in the many campaigns which had still to be fought before Nurhachu's vow was entirely fulfilled.

He did not live to see its final consummation, which was to go so far beyond anything his wildest dreams could have conceived. For even the China of Wei Chung-hsien was still a



gigantic power, and the bravest, best-drilled Manchu army incapable by itself of bringing the colossus down.

Indeed, Nurhachu died in hopelessness and grief, because Jesuit cannon belching forth brimstone and fire from the battlements of the well-defended Chinese frontier fortress Ning Yüan, tore such holes in his forces, they were compelled to raise the siege and return to Mukden beaten.

Overwhelmed by this new and bitter experience the old warrior died.

Not so his vow and all it entailed.

His fourth son, Huang Taiki, chosen as his successor, took up the banner that had fallen out of Nurhachu's hand and through eighteen years of fighting, watching, waiting, preparing, all but himself planted it on the walls of Peking. That he was able to succeed so far was one of Wei Chung-hsien's many crimes.

Afraid a victorious general might turn on him and rid the Emperor from the murderous incubus of eunuch mismanagement, he saw to it that the generals sent against the Manchus could not possibly achieve victory. And if by almost superhuman efforts a man like Hsiung T'ing-pi did overcome the obstacles purposely put in his way and win resounding triumphs, the fiend in power at Peking was past-master in manufacturing charges, which invariably cost the accused his head.

In spite of a yearly expenditure of 17 million taels on the northern war, the generals at the front complained bitterly that their soldiers were "deprived of their necessary training and often of their pay," that ignorant civilians placed in command hampered the military at every turn; and that the plans of campaign "were discussed at supper by courtiers and decided by eunuchs in the intervals of their debauches."

Nevertheless, the two strong fortresses beyond the Great Wall, Ning Yüan and Chin Chou, were still valiantly holding back the Manchu thrust, when Hsi Tsung, worn out by his licentious life, sickened and died just a twelvemonth after Nurhachu. He was buried in a mausoleum, which inappropriately enough was called the Tomb of Virtue (Tê ling), the last of the Ming graves built, although on a modest scale, according to the rules laid down for an Emperor's sepulchre. On the tablet in the Soul Tower is written: "Tomb of the Illustrious Ancestor, the wise Sovereign Lord" (Hsi Tsung Tche huang ti, tze ling). But his successor, Ch'ung Chêng, soon discovered how shamelessly that tablet lied.

What the deceased monarch had left him was a heritage of muddles, troubles and mistakes piled mountain high. Which-

ever way he turned the sky was black with thunder-clouds and the means at hand to build a shelter against the coming storms hopelessly inadequate. Nor was the new Emperor, though in every way superior to his brother, of the type on whom danger and difficulties act as a tonic and a spur.

He was only a youth of sixteen without even a rudimentary knowledge of affairs, because terrified of encroaching on Wei Chung-hsien's preserves, he had left politics severely alone.

That dangerous monster had planned putting a posthumously born infant of more than doubtful paternity on the throne with Hsi Tsung's widow, the Empress Chang, as the official, he as the actual Regent. But the Empress, whose strength of character, beauty and unimpeachable virtue had held out during the whole of her weak husband's reign against all the machinations set on foot against her, held firm now. With a lucidity of judgment and swiftness of action of which the male members of the Imperial family seemed totally incapable, she practically single-handed foiled the eunuch's plots and secured the throne for Hsi Tsung's stepbrother, in the absence of a living son the legitimate heir.

It was probably by her advice that he began his reign by ordering the arrest and trial of the Lady K'o and the banishment of Wei Chung-hsien. Both in the course of their nefarious career had made many enemies and accumulated untold riches, which now that Imperial protection was taken from them pleasantly stimulated the zeal of the righteous for their destruction. The Lady K'o was sentenced to the most hideous form of execution, the slicing process; her confederate hanged himself. But his body, too, was cut to pieces and his head publicly exhibited in his native town in grim warning to similarly inclined workers of iniquity. Nevertheless, the evil he had done lived after him, and on this praiseworthy effort at cleansing the palace, as on all the other praiseworthy efforts made by Ch'ung Chêng to avert shipwreck, fate wrote the despairing words, "Too late."

The poor ruler, still so young and already so overburdened, would often weep at the end of those long audiences in the solemn splendour of the throne-room when his ministers had finished pouring out the futility of their suggested remedies against evils swollen beyond the control of all but men of daring, grit and honesty.

Not that there were none such left among the loyalists; on the contrary, there were quite a number, but that the pernicious custom of eunuch espionage consolidated into a regular system by Wei Chung-hsien, and in his ignorant helplessness tolerated



by Ch'ung Chêng, condemned them either to obscurity or death.

Thus the general, Yüan, the terror of the Manchus, was destroyed by eunuch calumnies just at the time when he was needed most.

Nevertheless, the main guilt for the frightful tribulations that were to turn the peaceful, prosperous, light-hearted China of the sixteenth century into a hell of fire and torment, lies with the people, not with the Court. The nation betrayed the Mings, not the other way about. In face of the growing Manchu peril, rather than submit to the sacrifices imperatively needed for an effective defence, soldiers mutinied, rebels went over to the enemy and peasants gathered around leaders of so foul a character it seems incredible they could have found any followers at all. Ignorance, cowardice, the hope of plunder, finally the lust of blood and destruction hardened into a habit, in this as in all huge proletarian upheavals were the dominating motives of the masses ; envy, vanity, desire for notoriety and power those of the instigators of revolt.

Already under Hsi Tsung revolt had bared its teeth in Szechuan, Kuei chou and Shantung, and the White Lotus Sect, sure harbinger of political cataclysms, was putting forth its dangerous shoots.

The troubles were put down and with the luck of good harvests on the side of law and order, disaster might still have been averted or at least postponed.

But the stars were fighting against the Mings.

The first summer of Ch'ung Chêng's reign was one of dearth and famine in almost the whole of Northern China. Consequently, on the one hand, the starving poor flocked in vast hungry mobs round leaders who promised them rich plunder, while, on the other hand, the northern border tribes resented being deprived of their usual supplies of grain.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE DOWNFALL OF THE MING DYNASTY

**T**HE Manchu ruler, Huang Taiki, eagerly on the watch for an opportunity to further his father's vow, become the vow of the whole nation, and having frightened Korea into neutrality, seized on this discontent to carry out a daring raid into China itself.

Hitherto the fighting had been confined to the region of uncertain boundaries between the Yalu and the Great Wall.

In December, 1629, he forced his way through that mighty barrier which former Mings had been at such pains to render impregnable. Now the bulk of the troops of the north-western provinces having mutinied and turned brigands it was practically undefended.

So Huang Taiki swept through the Lung Ching Kuan and Huang Shan K'ou passes, seized the big city of Tsun hua chou and on the first day of January pitched camp outside a north-western gate of Peking, the Tê Sheng Men, the gate of Victorious Virtue. He had thrown the outside defenders back into the city, but then all the gates closed and blank stretches of solid brickwork forty feet high glared at him steep, unscaleable, bristling with cannon, twenty large and fifty small pieces, directed by the able brain of a German Jesuit from Köln, Johan Adam Schall, Matteo Ricci's successor.

Garrison and citizens now devoutly blessed Wan Li for having, in spite of his usual fecklessness, had the foresight to make extensive repairs on the walls. They were so strong they broke the force of Huang Taiki's invasion. In vain did he attempt to reduce the coveted prize by a wide encircling movement, setting fire to the ships frozen in at Tung Shou on the East and capturing Liang hsiang hsien to the South-west of Peking. There in the middle of January he offered sacrifice and worship to the tombs of the Nüchên Emperors, whose descendant he claimed to be, whose heir he was striving to become.

In vain, too, did he defeat the forces hurrying up to the relief



of the capital. The victory was won outside, not inside the Yung Ping Men, the Gate of Perpetual Certainty. From the walls Schall's guns continued to hurl destruction into his camp. Probably his soldiers grew restless under this unwonted mode of warfare.

On the 7th of February he folded his tents and moved away, captured a few more cities on his north-eastern line of retreat and was back in Mukden nine weeks later. He at once settled down to the task of making good the deficiency which had prevented his campaign from producing decisive results.

The very next year (1631), with the assistance of Chinese prisoners, his first big cannon was successfully cast. It bore the flattering inscription of "the heaven aided, terror-inspiring Great General."

Within the next few years he took further carefully considered and skilfully executed steps towards the goal of his life, among which the substitution of Manchu for Ming suzerainty over Inner Mongolia and Korea completed in 1635 and 1637 respectively and the administrative reconstruction of his young state on the Chinese model were the most important.

A subdued Mongol chieftain presented him with the old Yüan seal. That he celebrated this highly auspicious event in March, 1635, amid great rejoicings by proclaiming himself the "Magnanimous, benign, charitable, sacred sovereign lord," and his dynasty the "Great Pure," Ta Ch'ing, was only the ornamental flourish to a solid fact.

The insignificant tribe living penuriously in the shadow of the Long White Mountains had by dint of superb leadership and the upwelling of its own pristine vitality grown into the foremost power on the northern frontier of the Ming Empire, consciously and incessantly labouring to push this frontier as far South as possible, or better still to wipe it out altogether.

Meanwhile Ch'ung Chêng's advisers, at their wits' end to replenish an empty exchequer, imposed fresh taxes on grain and buildings. In the north-western provinces, impoverished by bad harvests and the recent war, this additional load roused storms of angry protest and the people, partly inflamed, partly terrorized by unscrupulous demagogues in their midst, began to think it easier to tramp round the country looting and murdering than to pay heavy taxes to a distant Emperor. By the time they realized that by refusing to bear their share of the nation's burdens they had handed themselves, their families and their property and those of their fellow-citizens over to the tender mercies of a trio of infamous cut-throats, they were powerless to return to normal ways.

These three, all born in Shensi, in poverty and obscurity, Chang Hsien chung, a Mahommedan; Kao Ying hsiang, nicknamed Prince Pounce-upon (Ch'uang Wang) on account of his proficiency in surprise attacks, the maternal uncle of Li Tzŭ-ch'êng; Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, himself shepherd, soldier, escaped convict, butcher, rebel, emperor, defy description in terms that can be printed.

For fifteen years (from 1630 to 1645) they spread terror and desolation wherever they showed their unwashed faces, and though frequently defeated by Imperial troops, their bands, scattered one day, reunited the next, finally crushed every province north of the Yangtze down under the weight of their blood-stained fists. Beginning with a small band of dare-devils under Kao Ying hsiang, in bewildering ups and downs, once fleeing with a bare sixteen followers, next bringing the strongest cities low with armies numbering a million fighting men, these throw-backs into submerged hells of savagery, pillaged and burnt innumerable towns and villages, tortured and massacred thousands of their own kith and kin, brought Hung Wu's work and dynasty crashing to the ground and handed their country over once again to alien domination.

Kao Ying hsiang was the first of the three to be overtaken by retribution. Ming troops seized him in 1636 and sent him to Peking, where he was executed.

But both his name "Prince Pounce-upon" and his authority passed on to his nephew who more than carried on his work. He found an ally in the Mahommedan Chang Hsien-chung, who began his career as the robber-chieftain of eighteen fortified mountain hamlets and therefore called himself the Great Prince Eight (Pa Ta Wang). However, when success made them both stretch out greedy hands towards the crown, their rivalry would have turned to bitter enmity if Prince Eight had not realized that Li Tzŭ-ch'êng would prove a more terrible foe than he cared to face. He withdrew his hand in time.

Only after Li Tzŭ-ch'êng had had his innings, and was once more and for the last time a hunted fugitive, did Chang Hsien chung, elated with his recent conquest of Szechuan, proclaim himself Great King of the West.

He replaced all his former confederate's men by his own and drowned his secret dread of coming disaster in a welter of human blood. Troops of whose loyalty he was not absolutely sure he cut down to a man, 80,000 to 90,000 of them. He dispatched four of his generals throughout the length and breadth of his newly acquired Kingdom to inculcate the expediency of implicit loyalty by squads of executioners.



This he called weeding. "Death by the decree of Heaven" was the euphemism he employed for the summary execution of any of his ministers whom his hounds nosed at while they were lying prone on their stomachs before him at the morning audience.

He rewarded his men according to the number of heads they brought in. Those who showed signs of remissness were skinned alive, their families butchered. Furious with the scholars who turned from his government by murder, he decoyed 30,000 candidates into his capital by the bait of a literary examination and had them all slain. The brushes and ink cakes of the unfortunate youths "were piled up in mounds."

Other victims were buried alive in the central Park by this "Yellow Tiger" as the people called him, for he was tall with a sallow face and the jaws and treacherousness of a large feline. When news came of the approach of the Manchus, many of his own adherents preferred to go over to them rather than continue being exposed to his homicidal mania.

On a foggy morning he was surprised and slain, his army scattered, a good beginning made for the re-establishment of peace and law. Then gaunt and long-haired creatures gradually crept back from the mountain wilds to which they had fled in terror of the Yellow Tiger's fangs, living miserably on grass and leaves, men who had owned well-furnished houses and beautiful gardens, and grown rich with trade and happy with music, books and pictures. In his previous career when in 1643 he took Huang chou fu, he compelled the women to demolish the city walls, and then had them all slain to fill up the moats with their corpses. In three other large towns he conquered along the Yangtze the massacre was on such a scale that for a whole month the river and lakes glittered with a coating of human fat, so thick the fish and the tortoises could not eat it all.

Li Tzŭ-ch'êng's cruelties were even worse because more cold-blooded and systematic. It is true he forbade massacres in any town which opened its gates at once (looting was of course another matter). But against that, in any town holding out one day, three-tenths, in a city holding out two days, seven-tenths of the population were butchered, while a three days' resistance was punished with total extermination. The dead were burnt. This he called "kindling light."

There altogether was a grim facetiousness about him and his crew with their queer nicknames like "King Sweep the Earth" or "Prince Shake the Sky."

When Prince Fu, the son of Wan Li, for whose sake Kuang

Tsung was nearly murdered, now grown into a stout old gentleman, was seized and slain in his residence at Honan Fu, Li Tzŭ-ch'êng seasoned some hashed venison with his blood and punning on the name "Fu," which also means good fortune, called this unsavoury dish the "Wine of Luck and Blessing" or the "Wine of Prince Fu's obesity."

All Ming princes fared badly in those days of triumphant blackguardism. Established from the beginning of the dynasty throughout the empire, they had lived in regal state, making their small Courts centres of a somewhat too sumptuous but none the less elegant and intelligent culture distinctly favourable to arts and letters. Caught between the envy of the rebels and the hatred of the Manchus very few escaped, and some of those only by taking office under Li Tzŭ-ch'êng.

The Manchus boasted of having dragged off three as prisoners and slain six; the rebels massacred two, beheaded one, and drowned another, Prince Chu, the only one who through his oppression and avarice deserved some punishment.

The others, like their cousin on the Dragon Throne, were open-handed, easygoing aristocrats, who fell not on account of their tyranny, but on account of their weakness.

In point of tyranny the rebel leaders could not possibly be equalled, least of all Li Tzŭ-ch'êng. His followers had been turned from a mob of brigands into an army of formidable fighting capacity by the fiercest discipline. In battle anyone looking backwards was immediately cut down by the men behind him; deserters were called withered grass and chopped to pieces. Whenever speed seemed imperative, all impediments, including women and children, were destroyed.

For the same reason and to prevent the growth of any tender-heartedness, children born to the soldiers were cast away. As a compensation they were allowed to adopt as many as twenty lads who worked for them, and in course of time became soldiers themselves. A system which explains why, notwithstanding many defeats wiping out thousands, rebel armies shortly always reappeared in the field stronger than ever.

Two other things made service with Li Tzŭ-ch'êng more attractive than with the government forces and produced wholesale mutinies and desertions among the latter: the better equipment—each of his soldiers had three horses and a coat of mail padded with from twelve to 100 layers of wadding impervious alike to bullets and arrows. Secondly, the prospect of immense booty and the power to play the lord over the people, for the discipline enforced in camp and on the march relaxed into utter license on conquered ground. Except intimidation



no other inducements were held out for joining the rebels, and do not seem to have been needed.

With that frank acceptance of the primitive, characteristic of the race, these hordes set out to loot and kill and to raise their leaders to the highest posts, without pretending to march under grand humanitarian banners. None of the philanthropic white-wash makers of wars and revolutions often find it politic to daub over their crimes was used, no universal redress of grievances preached, no millennium of peace, plenty and perfect equality promised.

The only bait Li Tzŭ-ch'êng ever held out was the remission of certain taxes and of forced labour, but since in the districts he conquered the country-side had been denuded of live stock, the cities of goods, one-half of the inhabitants slain, the other maimed, very little work or taxation could have been wrung out of them anyhow. His manifesto against Ch'ung Chêng is singularly lame :

"The present Emperor cannot be called an utter fool. But he stands alone and the oppression of his officials is like the heat of a fiery furnace. His ministers only serve their own selfish ends and conspire among themselves. Loyal men are few and far between. The prisons are full of unfortunate captives and the officials devoid of gratitude for favours received. The people are so oppressed by their exactions, that in their misery they abandon their homes."

There is nothing in this the most conservative Censor might not have said. It is a mild protest, not an inspiring, clear-cut programme.

The reason for this remarkable absence of any idea, Utopian or practical, of root and branch reforms is, that this movement was not a revolution prepared by years of doctrinal fanatization, but a spontaneous proletarian upheaval, produced by the combined pressure of famine, injudicious taxation and foreign invasion. The small number of intellectuals who joined it did so either to save their skins or from a conviction borne out by facts that the Mings through permitting Wei Chung-hsien's and his successors' tyranny had forfeited the mandate of Heaven.

Nor did they ever feel at home with their rebel comrades. Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, like the Mahommedan, hated scholars as much as he envied the wealthy and on one occasion ordered 190 of them to have their noses and feet cut off.

The Court he set up, when he assumed the title of Emperor of a new dynasty, Ta Shun, the "Great Obedient," did not differ organically from that of the Mings. Undoubtedly highly gifted as a military leader, he yet was so wanting in constructive statesmanship that having successfully fought his way to the

Dragon Throne, within six weeks his own shortsightedness rolled him off again, back into the mire from which he had sprung fourteen years before.

He is described as a man with a large head, high cheekbones, deep-set owl eyes, a scorpion nose and the voice of a wolf. Cruel and suspicious by nature, he killed men by chopping off their feet and cutting out their hearts as a pastime. At the siege of Kaifeng fu, the old capital of the Sungs, once again passing through the fire and flood of ghastly experiences, an arrow pierced one of these owl eyes.

But he was a firm believer in prophecies and remembered one which foretold that a one-eyed man would win the Empire. So he made the most of his remaining sight, attacked the town more fiercely than ever, and took it after having let the swollen waters of the Huang Ho loose upon it by sapping an embankment.

A flood twenty feet high thundered in at the north gate; long stretches of the huge walls against which the rebels had for months vainly spent all their ingenuity of sapping, battering, exploding, gave way at last. The number of drowned amounted to a million, not counting 10,000 rebels. The desolation was so appalling, Li Tzū-ch'êng could not stay in the city he had stopped at nothing to take.

He turned south-west and consolidated his position in Central China preparatory to his final effort, the capture of Peking. Having seized Hsiang Yang fu, the capital of Hupeh, he made it his own, styled himself the new King obedient to Heaven, Shin Shun Wang, repaired the palace of the dead Ming prince and resided in it.

This marked a great change from his usual habits, and showed that he now thought his goal so safe and near he could begin to relax a little. Hitherto he had always scorned to live in a house and preferred a long tent of coarse cloth, furnished in the roughest manner. He kept no servants, only one wife and one concubine, both elderly women, who patched his clothes and cooked his food. But he would husk his grain himself and more than share his soldiers' hardships and dangers. He had a great gift of silence too, and at councils of war listened to everything his officers reported and proposed without saying a word himself, but making up his plans afterwards alone. The others had to guess them as best they could from the direction of next morning's march.

There was neither such abstemiousness nor concentration of purpose in the palace of Ch'ung Chêng. Not that this Emperor of a thousand sorrows fiddled while the country was on fire, far



from it, but that the voluntary giving up of a luxurious mode of life inherited from a long past of unbroken prosperity is so difficult as to be practically impossible. Even if he himself had been content to keep as plain a table as Li Tzŭ-ch'êng the expenses of the palace would not have been reduced by more than a few copper cash. What made them so high were the bebies of women, Dowagers, Empresses, concubines on the active and on the retired list, princesses, ladies-in-waiting, maid-servants all expecting to be housed, clothed, fed and amused.

Ch'iu Ying has painted them in the hey-day of their happiness under Chia Ching, jewels in the black of their glossy hair, knotted ribbons round their slender waists, long brocade skirts and shimmering scarves trailing through sumptuous halls, over marble terraces, between the flowers and rocks and bamboos of wonderful gardens, all busy with a dozen various occupations and amusements, a vision of a refined elegance next which Watteau's most graceful figures almost seem plebeian. But of course they were parasites and owing to the need of eunuch attendants carried yet more numerous and dangerous parasites in their wake.

Ch'ung Chêng, grown to adolescence in the oppressive shadow of Wei Chung-hsien's and the Lady K'o's domination, nervous, shy, irresolute, had no bones, only gristle in his make-up and oscillated unhappily between pessimists who rang futile hands in premature despair, and optimists, who felt sure a ship full of holes below the water-line could be kept afloat without immediate and intelligent resort to heroic measures. It is true difficulties arose and multiplied at such a rate, an older and wiser head than his might well have been at a loss as to which to grapple with first.

In his first year, 1628, famine in the north-west and the first mutter of revolt.

In his second year, 1629, wholesale mutinies in three western, serious piracies in two eastern provinces.

In his third year, 1630, Manchu invasion, siege of Peking, spread of rebellions, many towns and villages sacked and burnt.

In his fourth year, 1631, loss to the Manchus of an important city in Liao Tung.

In his fifth year, 1632, conquests by rebels in the West, Manchu raids in the North.

In the following five years further Manchu raids and continual fighting with the rebels with varying success. Consequent growing exhaustion of the exchequer.

In his eleventh year, 1638, ineffective attempts to pacify the rebels by a policy of conciliation, big Manchu invasion penetrat-

ing as far South as Shantung and coming within twenty-five miles of Peking. Six prefectures devastated, fifty-seven cities taken, thirty-three battles lost, 462,223 people dragged away into captivity, 4,000 ounces of gold, 977,800 of silver looted.

The next four years sweeping victories of the rebels along the Yangtze.

In his fifteenth year, 1642, his generals, including Wu San-kuei, severely beaten by the Manchus in Liao Tung. His offer of peace refused and a fresh invasion launched lasting into the middle of July, 1643, and netting a booty of 12,250 ounces of gold, 2,205,280 of silver, 4,400 of precious stones and pearls, 52,234 rolls of silk, 33,720 robes of brocade, 110 of fur, 500 fox and panther skins, 55,130 camels, horses, mules, oxen, donkeys, sheep, and last and least 369,000 human beings.

The death of Huang Taiki which occurred quite unexpectedly in September of the same year only produced a temporary respite. His ninth son Fu Lin was chosen as his successor, though only five years old, but the regent, his brother Dorgun, Prince Sui, was known as an extraordinarily able man. So with only one fortress, Ning Yüan, left beyond the Great Wall, with direct communication to the South blocked by bandit and insurgent gangs, with all the western and most of the central provinces under rebel control, and the few still governed by the Mings almost ruined, Ch'ung Chêng may have foreseen that the seventeenth year of his reign would be his last.

Li Tzŭ-ch'êng having moved his capital to Hsi an fu, which in memory of the glories of the Hans and the T'angs he renamed Ch'ang-an, celebrated New Year's Day (18th February, 1644) by taking Splendour Everlasting, Yung Ch'ang, as the first reign title of his Dynasty and canonizing his ancestors from his grandfather downwards as Emperors. He also turned ten of his officers into marquises, seventy-two into earls, thirty into viscounts, fifty-five into barons. It is hoped they all washed and deloused themselves before putting on the robes appropriate to this giddy rise in social status.

There were no such celebrations in the legitimate capital. A howling dust-storm put a cruel sting into the wintry cold and there were many other things which must have made the prescribed wishes for 1,000 years of life freeze on the lips of the great officials as they prostrated themselves before the steps of the Dragon Throne on which a Ming Emperor was welcoming a new year for the very last time.

Feng Yang, the founder's birthplace, had been shaken by an earthquake and already in 1635 the tombs of his parents and grandparents in the I Sheng Shan, the Mountains of Dawning



Holiness, had been desecrated by rebel incendiaries under Kao Ying-hsing. Whereupon Ch'ung Chêng had put on mourning and wailed in the ancestral Temple over news of such bad augury.

Now worse facts and omens were closing in upon him. Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, the Emperor of the new, the Great Obedient Dynasty, was on the march against Peking with cavalry 600,000 strong and 400,000 infantry, war-seasoned, disciplined, heavily armed.

Beyond the Great Wall the terrible Manchu Tiger was gathering up his limbs for another savage leap. What had the government to oppose these concentric avalanches?

Wu San-kuei had an efficient army, but it was locked up in Ning Yüan, the last fortress north of the Wall, barring invasions from Mukden.

Against the more pressing peril from the West nothing but a handful of ill-fed, ill-led, ill-paid troops could be put in the field. There were some fortified cities and passes, but at best these would only delay or deflect the rebel advance. As it turned out, thanks to terrorization and treachery, they failed to accomplish even that little.

Of course there were the massive ramparts encircling Peking. Fourteen years before they had triumphantly defied Manchu onslaughts. And these rebels dogs were surely not nearly as formidable a foe.

The walls, too, were in good condition. Patriots had seen to that. Realizing the straits in which the government was floundering, Ts'ao, a Censor of the Board of Rites, had in 1635 provided funds for such extensive repairs, a good thirty tablets were needed to commemorate his munificence.

Equally public-spirited, the Grand Secretary, Li Chien-t'ai, a wealthy banker with large properties in Shansi, now offered to equip and lead an army against Li Tzŭ-ch'êng. The Emperor who had first declared he would gladly himself "march to battle and perish on the sandy plain," on second thoughts preferred to see the banker march. He gave him a sword of honour, the diploma of an Imperial Commander-in-chief, a grand farewell banquet at which he three times drank to his health in a golden cup. So Li Chien-t'ai and his recruits sallied forth into the open country, banners waving, spring beginning. But almost immediately afterwards the whole of Shansi, including the banker's property, fell into the enemies' clutches. Consequently Li Chien-t'ai had nothing left with which to pay his army. It starved and scattered. He returned almost alone, gave his master the only wise advice still possible to follow, immediate

flight to Nanking, and went home and sorrowfully ended a life too dreadful to bear.

If Ch'ung Chêng had followed this advice, he might yet have saved the dynasty, not as master of a united China, but as Southern Mings, perhaps residing in the restored palace of the Southern Sung, with the Manchus fighting Li Tzŭ-ch'êng for the possession of the North. It was the Manchus' good luck that the poor man, distracted by prolonged oscillation between unjustified optimism and unwarranted despair, now definitely settled into a gloom which could see nothing still worth an effort except death by suicide.

Previously he had issued a penitential edict, saying :

"In the watches of the night sunk in measureless self-abasement I mourn over public and private woes. . . . I will strengthen our resources by employing able men . . . and by remitting unjust taxation assist my subjects' poverty. To whoever returns to his allegiance and repents his sins I promise pardon and high rank ; to whoever captures the rebels Li Tzŭ-ch'êng and Chang Hsien chung a marquise and corresponding official rank."

On Wu San-kuei he bestowed an earldom and at the same time ordered him to send as many troops as he could possibly spare to strengthen the garrison of Peking. But then, in spite of his good resolutions, he did nothing to take the control of that garrison out of the partly incapable, partly treacherous hands, of eunuch commanders, and even placed his last remaining provincial forces under the orders of the powerful eunuch Tu Hsün, though he must have known that this creature was not to be trusted. Had he not had the effrontery to seriously suggest abdication? Evidently his old fear of the eunuch gang was upon him again. Even in this hour of extreme peril he did not dare offend them and work whole-heartedly with the patriots.

It hastened his ruin, for Tu Hsün, believing that a timely act of treason would receive richer rewards than a belated one, turned against the loyal governor of the strong city of Hsüan hua fu, the last barrier but one between the rebels and the open plain of Peking. In Court robes and the dragon jacket bestowed on him by an over-indulgent master, he went forth ten miles beyond the city gates, grovelled at the feet of his new master, Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, and made him a present of the town.

A short week later the next and last barrier, the fortress Chü Yung Kuan, guarding the Nan K'ou pass, was similarly surrendered. The capital with its palace and its Dragon Throne was now only thirty miles off.

On the 19th of April Li Tzŭ-ch'êng sent a detachment to the



Ming tombs to lay them low and annihilate all the blessings that flowed from them. But whether Yung Lo's spirit arose in its might and frightened the miscreants, or whether they were anxious not to be late for the looting of Peking, they certainly did not give themselves time to carry out any thorough destruction. No doubt they robbed extensively, a few of the mausoleum temples went up in flames, otherwise the peace of the great dead was not disturbed. Only they withdrew into far fields of eternity and sent no help to their unfortunate descendant walking up and down, muttering disconnectedly to himself in the halls where they had kept such gay and sumptuous state.

The Imperial mounted troops fraternizing with the rebels, no scouts ever coming back, while Li Tzŭ-ch'êng's spies kept him informed of everything, Ch'ung Chêng realized too late that the whirlpool rush of disastrous events was already sweeping him towards the dreadful plunge into the abyss. Previously his astronomers had warned him that dire eclipse was threatening his star. How could it go on shining, with 600,000 rebel cavalry and 400,000 infantry war-seasoned, obedient, heavily-armed on the march against Peking? On the 23rd of April their vanguard was sighted from the Towers of the Western Gate of Equitable Rule.

Hastily the gates were closed, the walls manned, but by whom? By unpaid, demoralized troops led by eunuch traitors. More out of habit than from any hope of assistance the Emperor summoned his councillors. Profoundly perturbed, confronted point-blank by disaster, they had nothing to offer but tears. Ch'ung Chêng in disgust flung out of the room, knocking down his dragon-chair. Grey-faced the councillors slipped away and hurried home, some to commit suicide with their whole family, some to bury their treasures.

Next day the rebels arrived in their whole formidable mass, began to bombard the north-western bastions and their Emperor set up *his* dragon-chair in a busy camp just outside the Gate of Manifest Loyalty (Chang I Men) where the lower walls promised easier entrance. The traitor Tu Hsün acting as go-between, climbed up by a rope ladder and brought Ch'ung Chêng his rival's ultimatum—immediate abdication.

He was angrily dismissed.

The bombardment continued.

At nightfall it ceased, not because it had been silenced by valiant defenders, but because the eunuch commander, Ts'ao Hua chun, had by a strange irony opened the very gate dedicated to loyalty. It was the west central gate of the southern suburb. The rebels poured in.

But the city itself was still untaken. Its huge walls loomed sheer and black against the darkening sky. Again too late Ch'ung Chêng decided to send his sons away to the comparative safety of Nanking. He had to be content with having them taken into hiding in the houses of relations, though that was only one degree less dangerous than keeping them in the Palace.

Mournfully he went up the Hill which Kublai Khan had once made so green and so beautiful for his special delectation. He could see the camp fires of the rebels glare at him out of the darkness like the evil eyes of a gigantic hunger. And there were other fires, conflagrations lurid beneath the unattainable calm of white stars in the zenith. His own star was not amongst them. For a long time he stood there thinking, then disconsolately wandered back to the Hall of Heavenly Purity, called for wine, drank freely, summoned his wives and daughters and told them hope was over, that they all must die. The Empress obeyed at once and hanged herself in her own palace. His eldest daughter he tried to kill with a sword, but handled it so badly he only hacked off an arm. The concubines fled in wild panic. Some rushed out of the Palace and drowned themselves in the canal, others jumped into wells. About 200 perished. The remainder crouched in secret corners of innermost courtyards waiting terror-stricken for the next blow.

The fifth watch of the night was waning.

The rebels from the southern suburb battered at the main Gate facing the Sun (Ch'êng Yang Men), seized it, swarmed in.

Peking was theirs.

If Ch'ung Chêng wanted to die a free man, he could not delay much longer. Loyalty had perished or lay paralysed with fear, but routine held firm, the bell for the customary morning audience was duly rung. Its vibrations echoed through the empty courts, and died down unanswered. No councillor came. The guards too—all eunuchs—were gone, fled in the dark with what they could steal. Accompanied by only one attendant, also a eunuch but a faithful one, Wang Cheng-en, the Emperor once again went up Kublai Khan's hill. The fires were still burning, but more dimly in the grey of the dawn. The stars had grown invisible, but the birds were beginning to twitter and stir. The great course of nature went on untroubled.

And on that green hill overlooking the city he had protected so feebly, Ch'ung Chêng wrote his last edict on the lapel of his robe :

“ I, weak in person, deficient in virtue, have offended Heaven on high. My ministers deceived me. Dying I am ashamed to face my ancestors,



and have removed my Imperial head-dress and pulled my hair down over my eyes. Let the rebels dismember my body but show mercy to my people."

Then he hanged himself. So did the faithful eunuch.

A ghastly day dawned over the captured city. From the weary brain of these two hanged men dangling emptily in the dimness of a small pavilion, the idea of suicide grew and spread and seized hundreds and in ghoulish greed fastened girdles round the soft throats of beautiful women and ropes round the necks of stalwart men and filled up the wells with choking beings and made great officials slay their wives and children, set their mansions on fire, dash open their skulls. And they were the fortunate ones.

Those who had hoped to curry favour with Li Tzŭ-ch'êng by asking him to ascend the vacant throne and by accepting office under him, soon discovered their mistake. Most were beaten and tortured to make them confess where their money lay hidden, and as often as not beheaded if they survived the beating. As to the ordinary citizens, the rebels quartered in their houses could treat them as they liked. In one street alone 370 women and girls were raped and murdered. Some such occurrences were of course unavoidable and given the general anarchy Li Tzŭ-ch'êng cannot be held specially responsible for them. But the torturing of wealthy officials was entirely his own doing, an act of cold-blooded cruelty dictated by greed. His hour of triumph, which he should have used with far-sighted moderation, revealed his intrinsic worthlessness and therefore only remained an hour.

The blood-stained milestone of the Great Obedient Dynasty which he set up, in that late April day, sank down under the weight of its own crimes and follies in the first week of June.

He probably did not foresee this rapid downfall when towards noon he rode triumphantly into his new capital mounted on a piebald horse, dressed in light blue, a plain felt hat on his head. In the Hall of Imperial Supremacy (Huang Chi Tien) he held his first audience, sitting squarely on the throne of the Mings, but "the claws and crests of the dragons woven on the Imperial dais swayed threateningly" and the usurper felt "very scared." Some officious eunuchs had ferreted out Ch'ung Chêng's sons and brought them in. Standing in the way of grown men's ambitions these poor children had not long to live, though for the present no harm was done them and they were kept in the palace.

Their dead father, too, received a certain amount of consideration. His last will remained unfulfilled. It was better fun

beating and squeezing his live subjects than dismembering his dead body. After being left three days in a shop just outside the Palace, it was encoffined, as was that of the Empress, and both were conveyed to the cemetery their great ancestor had selected with so much care.

Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, grudging the money for a proper burial, ten local patriots "subscribed 34,000 cash and hired workmen to open and close the underground passage to the grave of Ch'ung Chêng's concubine T'ien. She had died two years before and been given so large a tomb the Emperor and his wife could easily be buried there too.

"Four days and nights they dug in the earth before they reached the stone door of the crypt. With levers and crowbars they forced it open and entered the vault." "They moved the concubine T'ien to the right side of the couch, placed the Empress on the left and then respectfully gave the sarcophagus of the deceased Emperor the place in the middle. Before each coffin they put an incense table with its ritual vessels; the lamp burning 10,000 years was lit, the stone gateway closed again, the earth shovelled back."

"On the sixth day those who had defrayed the funeral expenses, also the village elders and others offered a sacrifice. Their wailing and weeping shook the whole sky."

Subsequently by order of the next dynasty the whole sepulchre was enclosed with walls and thus "the deceased Sovereign of the Great Ming was saved from being lost in the vast plains and enabled to enjoy for generations sacrificial food in the distant regions to which he had gone."

He had won peace.

But his unfortunate people was to be torn by wars for another eighteen years.

The Manchu peril which had played so large a part in Ch'ung Chêng's ruin, now assumed overwhelming proportions. The Regent Dorgun, Prince Sui, true son of Nurhachu, at once perceived that the conquest of the whole of China, from a remote chance had become an immediate possibility, the more so as Wu San-kuei, who was on the march to save Peking, appealed to him for help against the rebels, and that in spite of the fact that his father had gone over to them. The old man hoped thereby to save his life. He was to lose it after all.

His son's favourite concubine, the "Round-faced Beauty," had been seized by one of Li Tzŭ-ch'êng's generals. This so enraged Wu San-kuei he determined to throw in his lot with the Manchus. At least that is the usual explanation.

It is, however, possible that, like all men loving law and



order, he loathed the rebels intensely and was quite sincere when he denounced them as "wolves and jackals infesting the capital, as dogs and swine befouling the palace," brutes to destroy whom all means were justified, even the dangerous double-edged sword of Manchu assistance. Also like his father, considerations of personal safety and advancement weighed more heavily with him than devotion to Confucian principles of loyalty.

Caught between the Manchus distinctly on the war-path, and the tumultuous well-armed masses of Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, he succeeded for a long time in keeping both at bay by vague offers of allegiance. Li Tzŭ-ch'êng hoped to buy him, priced him at 40,000 taels and sent him that amount, but accompanied by a letter in which he threatened to kill his father unless he at once joined the new dynasty. At the same time he bestowed the "Round-faced Beauty" on the Ming Prince Imperial, no doubt to sow deadly enmity between him and Wu San-kuei.

The latter, nevertheless, played for a while with the idea of placing this youth as Emperor on the throne, with himself holding all real power as Regent, Grand Secretary and Prince Pacifier of the West. Among all these hesitations Manchus, rebels and Wu San-kuei came to blows.

Whether he felt oppressed by the quiet grandeur of the Ming palace or whether his forces near Shan Hai Kuan, where the Great Wall touches the sea, needed the tonic of his presence, eleven days after his entry into the capital Li Tzŭ-ch'êng himself marched against Wu San-kuei with an additional 100,000 men. On the 27th of May, a strong wind pelting his soldiers with dust and grit, a fierce battle was fought at a spot called the Valley of Stones and decided against him by a dashing charge of 10,000 Manchu horse. For fifteen miles they pursued the broken foes, slaughtering them wholesale.

"The fields were strewn with corpses and the watercourses all ran red. By forced marches Li Tzŭ-ch'êng rushed back to Peking, but from one camp on the way sent Wu San-kuei the Prince Imperial and the Round-faced Beauty and offers of an offensive and defensive alliance against the Manchus. One of its terms provided for longitudinal partition of the empire between the Great Obedient and the Ming dynasty, the former to own the western, the latter the eastern half. The physical vicinity of the Manchus, however, decided Wu San-kuei to shave the front part of his head and plait his remaining hair, a following of the Manchu fashion demanded by Prince Jui from all Chinese in token of submission.

After the victory of the Valley of Stones, though he still kept up the pretence he was only fighting Li Tzŭ-ch'êng and

him merely "from a sense of humanity and to avenge an universal wrong," he did actually assume the rôle of a conqueror and demanded the recognition of his nephew, the young Manchu Emperor, as Ch'ung Chêng's legitimate successor and ruler of all China. Ch'ung Chêng's son, whom Wu San-kuei had for a few weeks called Emperor with the reign title Yih Hsing, even announcing in Peking that he would soon return there and place him on his father's throne, seems to have been handed over to the Manchus. They quietly ended his brief career by poison, an unfortunate but clear necessity. Much suffering would have been avoided if all the remaining Ming princes could at once have been as painlessly removed from a world they only injured.

Meanwhile Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, defeated in the field, but still master of Peking, returned there. Only for a few days.

These he spent in killing every unhappy mortal against whom he felt a special grudge, like Wu San-kuei's old father, and above all in melting down into cakes of about 1,000 ounces each, all the silver literally wrung out of the wealthy and all the gold of the vessels and jewels found in the palace. There were about 10,000 of these glittering cakes, which he loaded on to mules and dispatched to his western capital Hsi an fu.

On the 3rd of June he amused himself and the city with as elaborate an enthronement ceremony as he still could manage. His elderly wife, no longer darning his clothes or cooking his porridge, was created Empress, his ancestors in the shadow world all became Emperors. Heaven and Earth in their sacred Temples were informed of this ex-convict's metamorphosis into an august Sovereign Lord. In the evening by way of fireworks, the main halls of the Palace and the wooden gate towers on the ramparts were set ablaze. The Court eunuchs, including the arch-traitor Tu Hsüan, were then called together, robbed of all they had themselves robbed and cudgelled out of the palace. After which the newly crowned Emperor with his loot and what was left of his 600,000 cavalry and 400,000 infantry trailed westwards, hoping to find enough safety behind its mountain ranges to enjoy his ill-gotten plunder.

He reckoned without Wu San-kuei's appetite for silver cakes and without Manchu efficiency. Prince Jui entered the Palace of the Mings only a couple of days later. A remnant of Court officials with trembling knees and shattered nerves silently received this new master whom the tornado of events had whirled to the top.

Would he remain there and how would he treat them? On the latter point he reassured them at once, rightly judging the Ming Empire would be terribly hard either to win or to hold



without the goodwill of as many experienced officials as fair treatment and promise of rewards could win over to the Manchu side. To calm the population, if indeed, stunned by the recent robbing and blood-letting, it required calming, he issued proclamations stating that the new government's sole aim was to protect and cherish the people, that honest officials would be left at their posts, the Code of the Mings maintained. At the same time he distributed detachments of the eight banners, into which the Manchu fighting power was grouped, over the entire town: the yellow in the north, the white in the north-east and north-west, the red in the centre, the blue in the extreme south. Thanks to his far-sighted statesmanship, the citizens of Peking soon found that after all their tribulations, they were safe under these banners from eunuch and brigand cruelties and could labour and enjoy the fruit of their labour in perfect security.

In October their new Emperor arrived from Mukden, a bright, strong lad of six, known as the Emperor Shun Chih of the Great Pure Dynasty. Sacrifice was solemnly offered up in the Temple of Heaven, of Earth, of the Spirits of the Grain and Harvests. Nor were the spirits of the Great Ming forgotten. All their sepulchral altars were honoured with proper rites, for the Ch'ings wished to be regarded as the legitimate heirs not as the rough supplanters of the Ming.

The live Ming princes who in consequence of this fiction had no right to exist at all except as obscure private individuals were treated very differently from the dead ones. They still could sting. Indeed, with one capable brain among them the Manchu conquest which after all was still only a rootless adventure might yet have been confined to Northern China. But none of the four Ming princes who succeeded each other on the throne set up South of the Yangtze, had even average intelligence.

Prince Fu, the first, whose opportunities were by far the best, was unluckily for the cause, also far the worst. Son of the corpulent Prince whose blood had seasoned Li Tzŭ-ch'êng's venison hash, grandson of Wan Li and the criminally inclined Lady Cheng, he viewed his nomination to the arduous post of his cousin's successor and avenger merely as a grand opportunity for indulging the vices he had inherited in deplorable abundance. To make matters worse, his leading favourite, Ma Shih ying, was a pupil of the evil school of Wei Chung-hsien. At a time when the most single-minded unity, the sternest husbanding of resources were absolutely vital, he indulged in a thousand petty jealousies, intrigued against the generals in the field and starved their troops in order to have more money to squander on actors and singing girls.

Shih K'o-fa, one of Ch'ung Chêng's ablest generals and an ardent loyalist, vainly remonstrated in letters of a frankness which would have aroused anyone not hopelessly deficient.

"Whilst Your Majesty is quaffing wine from beakers of jade it behoves you to remember your starving soldiers in the North. . . ." "How can we march without food? You cannot stimulate men to brave deeds by words alone. Let the money in your treasury be devoted to your army and your palace festivities cease. Until you have regained your capital dalliance in the Seraglio and at the banquet will bring no contentment to your jaded appetite. Our foes are watching your every action; if you amend not your ways your subjects' allegiance will surely be forfeited. You should rise early and not till late seek rest, ever mindful of your ancestors' achievements and eager to avenge your predecessor's death. . . ." "Where the Court is not pure the army will surely fail in its duty."

But it did not fail as long as it was under Shih K'o-fa's inspiring command. When he fell into the hands of the Manchus at their seizure of Yang chou fu, it disbanded and ceased to count as a serious fighting force. The Regent had repeatedly urged Shih K'o-fa to abandon a doomed cause and following Wu San-kuei's example receive honours and employment from the new dynasty, since the heavenly mandate had clearly passed into its hands. But Shih K'o-fa, even as a wounded prisoner, never wavered. Reluctantly, but to demonstrate how badly loyalty to the Mings now paid, the victors had him beheaded. Prince Fu, officially the Emperor Hung Kuang, was sleeping the slumber of the heavily drunk when the Manchus were already at the gates of Nanking. Gathering his alcoholized wits together as best he could, he fled out of his palace, out of his capital up-stream to Tai ping fu, which however banged its gates in front of his Imperial but bibulous nose. Fleeing by boat still further up river, he was pitched overboard by a traitor and given more to drink than even he could stand.

So his reign ended just one troubled twelve months after that of his cousin.

In the fall of that same year of 1645 another Emperor of a brief blood-stained hour, Li Tzŭ-ch'êng, dropped out of the ranks of the living. After his precipitate departure from Peking he had repeatedly attempted to make a stand against Wu San-kuei hot on his trail, and the Manchus sweeping round by south-western routes. But luck had turned against him for good. Brought to bay in the hills of Hupeh, some peasants attacked him and the small band of twenty, all that was left of his vast armies. They felled him to the ground with their spades.



His fellow-robber, the Mahommedan Chang Hsien chung, perished the following year.

Nevertheless, fighting continued, for Southern China kicked and plunged wildly at all attempts to put the Manchu bit between her teeth. In swift succession Prince Tang and Prince Loo, both descendants of Hung Wu, were raised to and disappeared from the throne of the Mings. From 1646 to 1659 Kuei Wang, a great-grandson of Wan Li, kept the Ming banner flying, but only half-mast and in the extreme South. He had a round face, a protuberant forehead, a long beard, a taste for letters, and in peaceful times might have made quite a good ruler.

But demons of war and division were rampant everywhere. Not content with battling against the Manchus, the Ming partisans fought each other, setting up a brother of Prince Tang in Canton in rivalry to Kuei Wang.

The famous pirate, Chêng Chih-lung, and his still more famous son, whose mother was a Japanese, were at times master of the entire southern seaboard and amassed a vast fortune by levying toll on all the ships plying there. Dreading the masterful hand of the Manchus, they on the whole supported the Mings, who allowed the son Chêng Ch'êng-kung the privilege of bearing their family name Chu. Consequently he became known as the Lord of the Royal Surname, Kuo Hsing yeh, in European mouths changed to Koxinga. The father allowed himself to be decoyed to Peking by promises of fine titles and emoluments and learnt to plait his pirate locks in Manchu style. But Koxinga, far from following suit, fought the invaders all the more fiercely.

These, once they had helped to rid the country of the two worst robbers, did not find its conquest the easy thing their seizure of Peking had led them to expect. The middle North rose against them, the Mahommedans in Kansu gave serious trouble, even the Mongols had to be kept in a good humour by very large gifts.

In 1659 Koxinga actually sailed up the Yangtze and besieged Nanking. But the gravity of the difficulties pressing in upon them only roused the Manchus to greater energy. Realizing they could never permanently master China without Chinese help, they stimulated the zeal of Wu San-kuei and two other prominent turn-coats, Shang K'o-hsi and Kêng Chung ming, raising them to the rank of princes and entrusting them with large powers to pacify the southern provinces. For several years this policy answered extremely well.

Wu San-kuei first drove Kuei Wang to seek refuge in Burmah

and then instead of letting him end his melancholy days there in peace compelled the Burmese to surrender him to his tender mercies. In 1663, in Yünnan Fu, where he ruled with much greater power than his luckless prisoner ever enjoyed, he had both him and his son slain, that the race of the Mings from whom he had received so many favours should never be able to stand in the way of his own secret ambitions. Many of the ladies of Kuei Wang's Court, including his wife and his mother, had come under Jesuit influence and giving their souls into the keeping of alien priests actually wrote to the Pope and adopted Christian names, Helen, Mary, Anne and so forth. Even the Heir-Apparent was made ridiculous as Prince "Constantine." So completely had these pitiable remnants of the once glorious Mings lost touch with the great traditions of their own country and forfeited all moral claims to the mandate of Heaven.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CH'ING DYNASTY

**S**HATTERED far more by the inefficiency of the last claimants of Hung Wu's heritage than by the attacks of the Manchus, the milestone of the Ming dynasty now lay in the dust past all hope of ever being set up again. The wall round Hung Wu's mausoleum dropped to ruin, the trees guarding his last sleep were cut down, temple roofs crashed to the ground with their glittering load of yellow tiles. K'ang Hsi, who came to worship there more than once, did indeed by strongly worded rescripts do his best to arrest all further decay and desecration and even discovered a Ming descendant sufficiently obscure he could safely be created duke and entrusted with the duty of keeping up the customary sacrifices to his imperial ancestors.

Repeatedly, too, his successors carried out extensive repairs on the tombs of the Mings.

Many other monuments and almost all the meritorious deeds of that dynasty they did their utmost to preserve and perfect. For the milestone they erected on the ruins of the old did not mark any change of direction, only an immense rise from low levels of self-indulgence, stupidity and superficiality, in which the original vigour of the Mings had become embogged, to splendid heights of mental, moral and material achievement. Whatever the Ming period had begun or attempted either in foreign expansion or internal development, in erudition, in art, in handicrafts, was resumed and brought to maturity under the brilliant rule of the great Manchu Emperors.

The only point where the Manchus fell behind the Mings was in navigation. They sent no such bold sailor as Ch'êng Ho to distant seas. In ignorant terror of the dangers of the deep, they could devise no better defence against Chêng Ch'êng-kung's piracies than the compulsory withdrawal several miles inland of the entire maritime population from the mouth of the Yangtze south to Canton. In addition they forbade their Chinese subjects to engage in sea-borne commerce of their own.

The former order was on the petition of an intelligent governor rescinded, but the latter seems to have remained in force for years, at least in the restricted form of a prohibition to trade with the southern barbarians.

"This shallow narrow idea of bookworms" moved the famous scholar Lan Ting yüan to an eloquent protest at the close of K'ang Hsi's reign. He pointed out that this trade was the chief source of wealth of Fukien and Kwangtung, besides providing an occupation for the adventurous elements of the inhabitants now driven to emigrate to Formosa where they fomented rebellions, or to turn to piracy for a living.

"The prohibition made the rich poor, the poor destitute, artisans vagabonds, vagabonds pirates and robbers." He demonstrated that the reasons given were wholly erroneous, one being the fear that Chinese junks would be seized by the pirates or bought up by the barbarians if they ventured out to distant parts. But "the pirates' ships hang about the coast dodging in and about the islands, and do not go more than 200 to 300 li out from shore. The foreign-sailing junks go out a thousand." As to the western barbarians there is no danger of their buying Chinese ships because their own "are built so very much more strongly and with better wood."

"They put in a whole tree where we use a plank, and nails of over one foot in length where we use nails of a few inches." "One of their masts worth in their own country 100 or 200 taels fetches 1,000 in China."

"Those barbarians, among them English, Islamists, French, Dutch, Spaniards, Portuguese, are a fierce violent lot, their natures dark, dangerous, inscrutable. Wherever they go they spy around with a view to seizing other people's lands." "Their ships are fearless of typhoons, their guns, powder, munitions of war generally superior to those of China." Yet with them trade is permitted, "forbidden only with the mild and gentle foreigners of the South. This reflects upon those officials who know the facts yet do not speak them. Where is their consideration for the prosperity of the Chinese people?" Sorrowfully he concludes, "Insignificant I can only look on and sigh."

And well he might. It was this failure to grapple boldly and intelligently with the problem of coast defence and ocean navigation that proved the Achilles heel by which the dynasty received its mortal wound. For it laid it open to the aggression of those "dark, dangerous, inscrutable barbarians" who undermined its prestige and hung the millstone of exorbitant indemnities round its neck. If the first Manchu Emperors instead of





CH'ING SHÊNG TSU IEN HUANG TI (1655-1723 A.D.). REIGN NAME K'ANG HSI  
IN HIS OLD AGE





pursuing a naval policy of frightened hares had systematically set about learning from the Dutch how to build storm-proof ships, if their porcelains, silks, and chests of tea had been carried to Europe in Chinese instead of Dutch bottoms, they would betimes have become aware of all improvements in naval construction and possessed a school of experienced sailors on which to draw in case of war.

Then Chien Lung's Summer Palace would not have gone up in flames and the ethics of China's ancient sages might have dominated international relations instead of those of the arsenal and the stock exchange.

Hunters, warriors, rough settlers "in miserable wicker-work carts and tattered hempen clothes" suddenly called on to rule an empire of vast dimensions and the most diverse interests, it was almost inevitable that the Manchus should make some mistakes. Bad luck rather than culpable lack of foresight made them err on a point at which subsequent developments, impossible to predict so early, rendered error fatal.

Nor was the first result of this mismanagement of sea problems entirely bad. It deprived thousands of their wonted means of livelihood, but the consequent increase in the numbers of pirates enabled their energetic leader, Chêng Ch'êng-kung, already master of Amoy, to oust the Dutch from Formosa.

These, having freed themselves from Spanish Catholic despotism in Europe, had started attacking it in the Orient, and from the second decade of the seventeenth century came sailing East on the best built ships afloat in the wake and on the track of Portuguese and Spaniards. More exclusively interested in trade than their enemies they yet followed their evil fashion of seizing foreign territory to evade the payment of custom-dues and to provide their merchants with comfortable homes. Ousting the Spaniards from their Formosan conquests, their own developed into a prosperous strongly fortified colony with a governor, a garrison, a subject native and a ruling Dutch population. Probably less from patriotic motives than from a pirate's lust for his neighbours' wealth and from a wish to own an impregnable principality, Chêng Ch'êng-kung with 500 junks and 40,000 men swooped down on the "red-haired barbarians."

One fort, Provintia, fell in May, 1661; the other, Zeelandia, after a nine months' siege, in February, 1662. The exhausted remnant of the garrison sailed away to Batavia and the triumphant Chêng Ch'êng-kung established a government which defied the Manchus for twenty-one years. He himself died within five months of his victory from a paroxysm of red rage at some misdemeanour committed by his son. But that son,

Chêng Chin, lorded it over Formosa and the opposite shore of the mainland almost up to his death in 1682. The whole of these twenty-one years were years of dangers and difficulties for the Manchus, of troubles and misery for the Chinese.

Between the death of Dorgun the Prince Regent, which occurred in December, 1650, and the taking over of the government by K'ang Hsi in 1667, the Manchus lacked that supremely able leadership which the still highly critical state of their affairs demanded.

Shun Chih, who in 1644 had come to Peking from Mukden, as a bright-eyed boy of six, never seems to have really taken root among its high walls and vast palaces, still gloomy and half ruined from the havoc wrought by Li Tzŭ-ch'êng. As he grew up and had to face the ungrateful task of ruling a conquered people still unreconciled to alien control, premature weariness fell upon him and made him seek comfort in the love of Tung Kuei fei and in the dreams of Buddhism. Wondering about the whence and the whither of conscious life, he wrote:

“ Dark the future for me as the past whence I came ;  
In vain in this human world have I lived one existence.  
I yearn to become a disciple of Buddha.  
Why still cling to the hollow pomp of an Emperor's throne ? ”

At his early withdrawal from worldly affairs it was whispered that he did relinquish this hollow pomp, and out of grief at the death of the Lady Tung in the autumn of 1660, retired to the peace of the T'ien Tai monastery in the beautiful hills West of Peking. As abbot there he found the enlightenment he had been seeking and passed away into the blessedness of Nirvana in 1670. His mummified body coated with dull gold lacquer and robed in Imperial yellow still sits in a richly decorated shrine, slightly bent forward as if to bless the pilgrims who come to implore his intercession.

But the official version of his death, as the result of an attack of small-pox in the winter following the loss of his favourite concubine, though more prosaic, is the more probable. He was only twenty-three and the first to be laid to rest among “ the thousand peaks and 10,000 streams ” of the Radiantly Auspicious Hills and the Mountains of the Golden Star East of Peking. It lies within the Great Wall which forms the northern boundary of this new Imperial cemetery, selected partly because the old Ch'ing burial-ground near Mukden was too far, partly because Nurhachu's descendants had made up their minds both in life and death to cling to the soil of China.

Shun Chih's burial took place in 1663 and his Empress who



had predeceased him and the one who survived him by two years were placed on either side of him.

The latter was the mother of his son and successor, Hsüan Yeh. As he was only seven, government was carried on by the ministers of Shun Chih whom he had nominated as regents on his death-bed. Besides two Empress-Dowagers, namely Bochito, a Mongol princess and widow of Huang Taiki, and Chorji, Shun Chih's widow kept a watchful eye over the welfare of the dynasty in general, and over that of the young Emperor in particular. The aged Jesuit Adam Schall as his special tutor awakened in him that love of accurate physical knowledge which was to distinguish him throughout his life and for which the Jesuits at that time supplied by far the best teachers. Their mastery in the fields of applied science won them his favour. They showed their gratitude by transmitting considerably clearer views of Chinese culture to Europe than had been current there till then.

Corroborating their glowing accounts, the magnificent lacquers, silks and porcelains exported in increasing quantities, especially during the latter half of his reign, made its name of K'ang Hsi (brilliantly prosperous peace) famous throughout the civilized world.

But during the five years of his minority, in spite of the application and talent he showed for his studies and the shrewdness of the old Dowager, there was little to indicate even a fraction of the coming glory. It is true the Regents passed some wise measures like the law against the employment of eunuchs in government posts, a law enacted once before under Shun Chih and considered so important it was engraved on an iron tablet weighing 1,000 pounds and set up in the Palace as a perpetual reminder to present and future emperors and empresses.

Officials were to be recruited from among scholars, and for this purpose the system of examinations interrupted by the long spell of troubles was definitely resumed in 1663.

But the most domineering of the regents, Duke Ao Pai, indulged in many acts of rapacious tyranny terrorizing Court and country. Following his evil example numbers of Manchu bannermen strutted about as full-blown conquerors and incensed the Chinese by violent dispossessions. In Peking there were no funds available for the repair of the most urgently needed audience halls.

In the North-East a new enemy, the Russians, were beginning to interfere with the old hunting grounds of the Manchus.

In the North-West the Mongols, tired of playing second fiddle, were wondering whether a minority might not provide a favourable opportunity for their resumption of their ancestor Kublai Khan's rôle which the Manchus had so artfully sneaked away from them.

In the South the last Mings were indeed wiped out, but their disappearance did not benefit the Manchus as much as it added to the power of the pirate son Chêng Chin, and above all to that of Wu San-kuei and the other two great Chinese princes, Shang K'o hsi and Kêng Chi-mao, son and successor of Kêng Chung ming. At best these national leaders, with their immense influence resting on their own armies, were allies rather than subjects and might at any time break away and attempt to make the Yangtze the theoretical as well as the practical dividing line between a northern half ruled by Tartars and a southern one ruled by Chinese dynasties.

Watchful and experienced, K'ang Hsi's grandmother soon detected the danger of a continuance of the Regents' quarrelsome mismanagement. They had besides aroused her anger by casting Adam Schall in prison on the strength of accusations brought forward against him by Yang Kuang hsien, the Mahomedan astronomer, jealous of Schall's superior knowledge. She ordered his release as well as that of his assistant Verbiest, a Flemish Jesuit. She did more. She decided that government was safer in the hands of an intelligent lad eager to work and to learn than in those of a set of conceited men, especially as the least objectionable of them, Suo ni, had just died, leaving Ao Pai supreme. The lad, too, was nearly thirteen, the age at which Manchus were considered to have attained manhood.

Therefore in August, 1667, the Regency was abolished and K'ang Hsi assumed control himself. But Ao Pai, in preparation of this eventuality, had consolidated his personal power to such an extent, another two years elapsed before he could safely be broken. Accused of numerous crimes he was cast into prison and strangled. The malpractices he had countenanced were annulled by a decree ordering the restitution to their original Chinese owners of all lands illegally taken from them.

Having thus taught his Manchu nobles a salutary lesson, the young Emperor set about the more ticklish task of doing the same with his Chinese princes.

Both his study of history and the teaching of Jesuits had convinced him that an enlightened autocracy was the only form of government capable of restoring stable conditions to his empire mentally shattered and materially impoverished by fifty years of terrorization from eunuchs, rebels, and invaders.



He realized that without considerable concentration of power in firm impartial hands the people would continue to be victimized by bullies like Ao Pai, pirates like Chêng Chin and local tyrants like Shang Chih-hsin. Quick at seeing what was needed and tenacious in getting it done he succeeded, enabling his dynasty in this as in so many other matters to score an achievement where the Mings only recorded an attempt.

Endowed with a magnetic personality, keen judgment, wide sympathies, an immense fund of bodily and intellectual vigour and natural gifts of command over himself and others, an indefatigable worker, highly educated, sensitive alike to the appeal of art and the claims of practical exigencies, physically slightly, mentally immeasurably above the average, with large live eyes and manners in which kindness, dignity and courtesy were perfectly blended, he was singularly well fitted for the part both intuition and reason told him he was called on to play.

From his earliest youth he seems to have been imbued with that sense of mission, of a call to be about his father's business characteristic of the truly great and such as no Son of Heaven had felt for a hundred years.

With that clearness of vision, which always made him attack a problem from its most fundamental side, he determined to bring about the unification and pacification of the country as the most urgent prerequisite for the fulfilment of his dreams. Neither were possible without an inner change from the reckless indiscipline, the selfish opportunism produced by and prolonging disturbed political conditions. He therefore began by guiding his subjects back to the tao of man, the ancient but unalterably right way of conformity with the indwelling divineness of the cosmos, the Eternal Tao, from which they had strayed so far and so long. Weary of disturbance and turmoil they were groping blindly towards deliverance, some stumbling into adhesion to obscure incense-burning brotherhoods, off-shoots of the old White Lily society, some into Roman Catholicism, some into the belief that the struggle against the Manchus as prepared by Wu San-kuei would save them. Their young Emperor knew better, and showed them a far simpler yet far surer way out of all their troubles, namely nothing more, though nothing less, than steady attention each man to his own immediate duties, to faithful pursuit of productive work, to the cultivation of a spirit of affection towards relatives, of kindness towards neighbours, of courtesy and forbearance towards strangers. He did not stoop to beguile them with promises of a millennium in this world or the next, which being incapable of fulfilment invariably lets hell loose among the bitterly

disappointed. Neither did he set up standards of an idealism beyond the reach and therefore constantly out of the thoughts of average men. Still less did he fall into the modern absurdity of preaching that external devices like stump oratory and ballot-boxes will automatically produce the good citizen, the only real corner-stone of a happy, prosperous state. Faithful to K'ung Tzū's sterling honesty, his holy Edict, sixteen simple maxims of seven characters each, indicated the path to upright useful citizenship and enjoined the people to follow it with a directness which left even the ignorant without an excuse for missing it.

In 1395 Hung Wu had ushered in the era of Ming prosperity with the publication of the Tsu Hsün, Lessons of Ancestral Wisdom. Following deep causal connexions K'ang Hsi in 1671 wrote over the gate by which a renewed and enlarged prosperity was to enter China :

- (1) Practise filial and brotherly love, that human relationships be exalted.
- (2) Strengthen family bonds, that harmony shine forth.
- (3) Live in concord with your fellow-men, that law-suits cease.
- (4) Cultivate husbandry and mulberry trees that ye lack neither food nor clothing.
- (5) Study thrift and simplicity, that possessions be preserved.
- (6) Multiply schools, that teachers prove examples unto students.
- (7) Reject false dogmas, that the true doctrine be held in honour.
- (8) Expound law and justice, that the ignorant and obdurate be warned.
- (9) Set forth rites and courtesy, that manners and customs be ennobled.
- (10) Devote yourselves to a profession, that the people's mind be steadied.
- (11) Instruct your sons and brothers, that wrong-doing be forestalled.
- (12) Stop false accusations, that the peaceable and righteous be not molested.
- (13) Warn concealers of fugitives, that they avoid complicity.
- (14) Pay your dues and taxes, that compulsion be prevented.
- (15) Join protective associations, that thieves and robbers be put down.
- (16) Make peace amidst hatred and quarrels, that life be saved.

On the first and fifteenth of each moon these exhortations were read and explained to the people in every city and market town by the appropriate magistrate.

In 1724, K'ang Hsi's son and successor, Yung Chêng, amplified them with commentaries written by eminent scholars. These and the original sixteen sentences were also translated into the colloquial, the object being to make them part and parcel of popular education. And the object was attained. Though earthly imperfection made it necessary to supplement



this moral suasion with fear of the bamboo, the virtues enjoined came to be followed so generally and habitually, as to grow into a national characteristic throughout the rule of the Great Pure Dynasty.

However, before this could be accomplished, the old demons of separatism and selfishness had to be met and fought in open battle. Lapse of time, which refuted all arguments that the Manchu conquest could not last by the simple fact that it did, was making the exceptionally favoured position of the three great Chinese princes in the South anomalous. With the secret accumulation of funds and forces by Wu San-kuei in Yünnan, the misrule and treacherousness of Shang Chih-hsin, the aged Shang K'o-hsi's unworthy son in Canton, and Kêng Ching chung's secret dealings in Fukien with the Formosan pirate prince Chêng Chin, it was even developing into a grave menace to Manchu power and Chinese peace.

Both Wu San-kuei and Shang Chih-hsin enlarged and beautified the palaces in which the last Ming claimants had held their ephemeral state to such an extent, they long remained famous as the most wonderful in existence. Wu San-kuei's son was married to an Imperial princess and lived in Peking, keeping his father informed of all that went on there, whereas the Emperor could find out nothing of what went on in Yünnan Fu. Shang K'o-hsi, however, with treason brewing in his own household, knew what was in the wind, and at once set his face against it, for long service with the Manchus had convinced him, they alone possessed the detachment and organizing ability for giving the country the strong administration it needed so badly.

It may have been on the strength of secret warnings sent by him, that some of K'ang Hsi's ministers recommended the disbanding of the armies of the three Chinese princes. Certainly in point of time their proposal coincided with Shang K'o-hsi's request to be relieved of his duties in Canton and allowed to retire to his old home in Liao Tung. His request was granted but coupled with the order that he should disband his soldiers.

Wu San-kuei, on the watch for a pretext to declare his independence, took this order as a challenge, and to gain time and discover K'ang Hsi's real intentions, together with Kêng Ching chung, also petitioned to be relieved of his duties. His petition was treated exactly the same way as Shang K'o-hsi's.

Thus the three princes were confronted with the alternative of ending their days in the leisured and wealthy but maddeningly obscure peace of private life or of disobeying the Emperor.

Shang K'o-hsi alone wished to obey. His son did not allow

it. In a few days the hundreds of thousands of soldiers far from getting disbanded were on the march, drums beating, banners flying into the war which with fluctuating success and varying intensity was for seven long years (1673-1680) to drag a trail of bloodshed and sorrow from Canton to the Yangtze and beyond into Shensi, the virus of its turmoil at times even threatening to infect Mongolia, Tibet, the great western routes.

As often happens, this mass murder, called war, opened with the murder of single individuals. The governor of Yünnan, trying to do his duty, was assassinated at Wu San-kuei's instigation. To one of his secretaries he handed a cup of poisoned wine at a banquet because he suspected him of being against rebellion. The purely selfish ambitions which started it were at first skilfully disguised as a great national revolt against Manchu oppression.

Wu San-kuei dressed his hair again in the fashion of the Mings, conveniently forgetting he himself had hounded the last Ming claimant to his doom. He assumed the title of Emperor of a new Chinese dynasty, choosing no less a name than that of Chou. He used force, suasion, money, to win adherents. Many districts joined him, mutinies brought Chinese troops in Manchu pay, over to his side. His war-junks sailed on the Yangtze. At Ching Tê Chên the Imperial porcelain factory went up in flames and for months the Peking Court may have had to eat its dinners off chipped plates, and sip its tea out of cracked cups.

Had this chronic turncoat been fifteen years younger and a more inspiring leader, his patriotic bluff might have won the day. But when he began to demand contributions from Shang Chih-hsin, and Chêng Chin, of pirate fame, started seizing maritime cities in Fukien on the ground they had been promised to him by Kêng Ching chung in return for his assistance, it became palpably clear that China meant nothing, personal aggrandisement everything, to all those selfish national leaders. At heart not bound together by a great cause, they soon envied and distrusted each other considerably more than they hated the Manchus. Consequently, whenever the fortune of war smiled on the latter, Kêng Ching chung and Shang Chih-hsin professed repentance and eagerness to return to their former allegiance, leaving the Chou Emperor to fight his own battles.

A seasoned warrior, he fought them well, and though unable to keep up his initial sweeping triumphs, he was far from defeated when a stroke of apoplexy brought him an ampler, deeper peace than he had looked for.

This happened in the fifth year of the war (October, 1678).



His son in Peking having meanwhile been executed, his possessions and pretensions went to his grandson Wu Shih fan. They proved a sinister heritage. Driven step by step out of all the conquered territory back to Yünnan Fu, Manchu guns battering down his last line of defence, this luckless heir to overweening ambition hanged himself exactly three years after his grandfather's death (October, 1681). But suicide did not secure him dignified burial. His body was dismembered, the head sent, a grisly trophy, to Peking. Wu San-kuei's corpse, too, was pulled out of its grave, the bones distributed for exhibition among the towns thought to need drastic reminders of Manchu might.

Death in one form or another had earlier in the same twelve-month been busy among the other leaders of Wu San-kuei's last and most luckless venture. Kêng Ching chung suffered the extreme penalty of treason, execution by the slicing process.

Shang Chih-hsin, in consideration of his father's merits, was allowed to kill himself, the Emperor sending him "a scarf of red silk" by a gentleman of the Bed-Chamber.

Already, in 1676, Shang K'o-hsi had died of grief and sickness, practically a prisoner in rebel hands. Loyal to the last, he wished to be buried in the robes of a Manchu official and his son at that particular moment somewhat doubtful about Wu San-kuei's ultimate triumph, fulfilled this wish.

Another prominent figure, the pirate prince Chêng Chin, after all his tumultuous takings and losings and threatenings of coastal cities, returned to his island stronghold merely to die in 1682. His son Chêng Ko shuang kept his flag flying another year, but with 300 enemy war-junks sweeping into the harbour on an unusually high tide and the spirit of the times decidedly veering from buccaneering towards law and order, concluded that the position offered him by K'ang Hsi of a Duke, enrolled in a red banner and endowed with regular rations of rice, silk and firewood, promised a longer and easier existence than his truculent ancestors had ever enjoyed. So he forswore their example and their independence, shaved the front of his head, braided his hair, and on the proceeds of their piracies lived no doubt most happily in one of those spacious mansions which were now rapidly wiping out the last traces of Li Tzŭ-ch'êng's destructive descent on Peking.

His former principality was drawn into the vast administrative network which K'ang Hsi, always swift both to learn and to apply the lessons taught by experience, had, immediately after the end of the rebellion, spread over the whole country. Like everything he started it proved a live, healthy organism, no pretentious, rootless innovation of theoretical perfection

and practical impotence, simply the infusion of an irresistible spirit of youth, honesty and efficiency into methods ramifying back to the earliest dynasties, methods through which the instinctive knowledge matured by the habits of centuries sent the rhythm of a warm responsive pulse.

Till then the Manchus had been content to govern by means of their army and the civil service taken over unaltered from the Mings, supplemented by haphazard additions made not according to the needs, but according to the meagre possibilities of the moment. That a great rebellion could break out and last seven years proved the utter inadequacy of this system. Its gravest defect the concentration of civil and military power in the hands of a few magnates residing at a great distance from Peking and consequently exercising authority without the slightest supervision and with full liberty to tyrannize over the people on the one hand, and to defraud the Emperor on the other, was summarily abolished through the death of the last rebel leaders, and any recurrence carefully guarded against.

Henceforth the rewards bestowed on deserving public servants were limited to wholly innocuous, purely ornamental titles and petty privileges of precedence, of the colour of girdles, buttons and reins with which the proud recipient was permitted to vex the eyes of his rivals. Not even Manchu princes of the blood were entrusted with a position at all comparable to Wu San-kuei's. There was no rebuilding of the local courts in which Ming princes had held semi-regal state in the capital of the provinces placed under their jurisdiction. Warned by the weakness this had produced in the central government and also by the insubordinate temper not always free from treason shown by several of Nurhachu's descendants, including the great Dorgun himself, the Ch'ing Emperors kept their relations jealously under their own eye. Though they provided for them liberally enough, they insisted on their residing in Peking, outside which they were not allowed to lodge except by special leave. Neither were they allowed to visit each other much, or to miss the daily morning audience to inquire after His Majesty's health. For representing him at the many ceremonial functions he had to perform he employed them frequently. In active politics he gave them no part.

Still less were any other nobles or great officials, whether civilian or military, Manchu or Chinese, again vouchsafed the opportunity of acquiring a local importance detrimental to the unity of the strongly centralized state K'ang Hsi was determined to turn from a fond hope of scholars to a working reality. The extent and diversity of the area under Manchu sway did of



course necessitate considerable delegation of authority, but means were devised to prevent any over-ambitious official from forgetting that his powers, however ample, were only delegated, and therefore revocable at the first appearance of treason or abuse. In the highest ranks he was never left more than a few years in one district, nor was he employed in his native province or city or even permitted to reside near them, a regulation which at one stroke checked partiality and the possibility of recruiting a large personal following in support of factious separatism.

Another check was provided by the interdependence of the different boards among whom power was so divided they automatically watched and controlled each other.

Nominations were largely kept in the Emperor's own hand and together with all rewards and punishments published in the "Peking Gazette," the reasons for their bestowal fully set forth for the edification of the whole official world who of course perused it most diligently. As a rule both the plums and the pills were administered on the strength of the confidential reports sent to the great Boards in Peking every three years by the high provincial magistrates who in their turn collected such reports from their subordinates. The Censors, too, kept a watchful eye on misrule or corruption—and inspectors would be sent down from Peking to investigate on the spot the conduct of officials against whom complaints had been lodged.

## CHAPTER XXX

### K'ANG HSI

THE Emperor himself would make such tours of inspection to the joy of the peoples and the terror of unjust governors. On one of these tours a corrupt viceroy was summarily executed. Indeed, as Gerbillon, the Court Jesuit, writes : " The mandarins stand in such awe of the Emperor they must be terribly sick to dare delay his orders ever so short a time." He trained them to look on Peking as the fountain-head of distinction or disgrace, the power never to be disobeyed or angered.

It was to Peking, too, scholars flocked to compete at the examination held every three years for selecting the very best out of the best candidates recruited from the entire country for the building up of a reserve of qualified men to fill vacant or newly created posts.

Carefully picked and thoroughly disciplined in the one indispensable essential of a genuine education—ethics, the members of this hierarchy through the whole scale of their nine ranks from the nervous beginner with his shiny brass button on his first official hat, up through the wrought gold and plain gold, the opal, the crystal, the lapis lazuli, the sapphire, the coral, the ruby button of the very highest, as a body, were animated by a remarkable spirit of loyalty to the throne they served, of devotion to the state they represented, of consideration for the people committed to their care. Their internal discipline, the unquestioning subordination of the lower to the higher ranks, aroused the admiration of the Jesuits, and though among their number—over 13,000 in K'ang Hsi's reign—some black sheep inevitably crept in, as a body they did prove a splendid force for the peaceful conquest of China, helping to give her the most complete unification she had ever known under a government which wisely tempered firmness with benevolence, and centralization with due regard for provincial susceptibilities.

The ease with which the Imperial magistrates secured



popular obedience also surprised the Jesuits, instancing that "The Governor of a large city does no more than publish his orders on a small piece of paper sealed with his seal and fixed up in place where the streets cross and he is instantly obeyed."

An immense amount of functions which in England would be distributed among judges, sheriffs, justices of the peace, clergymen, tax-collectors, governors of prisons, poor-law guardians were concentrated in his hands. This was feasible partly because guilds and family councils settled a quantity of cases privately which elsewhere are thrown unto the state, partly because speed was a matter of indifference to an official to whom clocks were amusing toys not alarming tyrants and who was perfectly content to sit in his yamen indefinitely, working incredibly long hours on slender pay and with the briefest of any holidays.

What he did object to, were rows and rebellions. They meant a very black mark against him in the "Gazette," because the prime responsibility for their occurrence was attributed to him, on the ground that though the fu mu (the father and mother) of the people, he had failed to instil that discipline into them which would have kept them from rowdyism. Consequently he was most anxious to keep the law-abiding contented, and the noisily inclined quiet by liberal and often prophylactically applied doses of the bamboo.

Swift, inexpensive, immediately comprehensible to the dullest intelligence and sinking deeply into the tough memory of instinct, there was much justification for considering it the best mode of punishment. Indeed, it was applied so often and so impartially the Jesuits could write that the Government seemed to subsist on it. Even high officials were not exempt, as the Emperor "would sometimes prescribe this fatherly correction to great persons," "afterwards seeing and treating them as usual." This was possible because the Chinese, intent on the cult of the spirit, never attached that importance to the body which Europeans had learnt from the Greeks, and which made them resent corporal punishment as an unpardonable insult, kneeling even before an Emperor as a frightful humiliation, physical discomfort as insufferable barbarism, besides leading them to exalt the representation of the human figure as the noblest form of art. Chinese susceptibilities lay on the mental not the material plane. Chinese gentlemen would accept with perfect equanimity the castigation that would have sent an European mad, but commit suicide on some point of honour imperceptible to the latter's vision.

Except in criminal cases these floggings were not severe, the

blows limited to twenty, with four reckoned as five. For slight offences, like crossing the street when a magistrate passed by, it was applied so expeditiously everything was over before bystanders had time to notice what had happened.

That it was resorted to at all for such a trivial fault, was due to the extreme urgency of re-inculcating respect for the state and every one of its official representatives. Anarchy, varied by intermittent fevers of ruthless despotism, had been the rule so long, defiant lawlessness or morose terror had become the people's only response to government action. Ancient habits of ready obedience and proper deference to established authority were forgotten and had to be re-created.

K'ang Hsi, with his generous horror of bloodshed and sympathetic insight into human nature, rightly judged he would achieve possibly slower but surely more lasting results if he avoided wholesale executions for flagrant breaches of the peace, and relied more on the regular reading of his sacred edict, supplemented by light but immediate punishment for the least manifestation of truculence or even for mere lapses of good manners. Thanks to his reign of sixty years ensuring an almost unique continuity of policy, fashions had time to crystallize into automatic habit, and he did succeed in building up that inner acquiescence in law and order which alone can make a government function smoothly and establish the right relationship between ruler and ruled, a grave sense of responsibility and parental solicitude on the one side, admiring awe and happy confidence on the other.

As a third means of teaching the people the power and importance of the Ch'ing state, he made its outward appearance as impressive as possible. Even a magistrate of the fifth rank never appeared in public except gorgeously clad and escorted by a splendid retinue, "four men carrying him in a gold lacquered chair, open in summer, covered with silk in winter," preceded by the brilliantly uniformed officers of his tribunal, some bearing silk umbrellas and lanterns, "others striking a copper gong and commanding the people to show respect as he passed along."

Officials of the first rank, like viceroys of large provinces, of course made a still more dazzling display, with guards on foot and on horseback, mace-bearers and ensign-bearers, kettle-drums, copper gongs, standards on which dragons, tigers, tortoises and strange winged animals symbolized the attributes of power with the picturesque vigour of original speech, flags with all his honorific titles legible in large elegant characters, eight men carrying his chair and a bevy of attendants following,



some with the chains, rods and swords for overawing evildoers, others with the quiet, harmless things a scholarly gentleman needs on the journey, a cap, some books, a writing-case.

As to the progress of the chief official of the State, the Emperor, with its procession of princes and soldiers, its embroideries and trappings, it was a blaze of gold and yellow splendour. "Everything in it glittered, the arms, the harness, the banners, the umbrellas, the trumpets, the fans."

Nor was this pomp idle, empty luxury, rather the most effective way of convincing an artistic nation, swayed by visual impressions, that it was now facing a power at once so strong, it would be madness to oppose it, and so magnificent, no honour could be greater than serving it.

For the same reason the palaces from which this power flowed and the yamens where it dispensed its justice, dazzled with resplendent roofs, lacquered porticoes and pillars, bronze lions and spirit screens emblazoned with gorgeous dragons, that ancient and unsurpassable symbol of heaven-sent dominion,

The roads, too, along which its representatives travelled were made wide and smooth and safe, every ten li a battlemented, well-garrisoned watch-tower marking its sleepless vigilance, sending signals on high in the daytime by smoke, by fire at night.

And couriers sped along those roads with its orders, news and manifestos, for the southern rebellion had taught K'ang Hsi the lesson Kublai Khan had understood so well, that unimpeded and rapid circulation of reliable reports from the whole body of the empire to the central brain and of the latter's decisions back to the body to its furthest periphery is the *sine qua non* of effective government, the only way to prevent dangerous stagnations occurring at some vital artery. He therefore insisted on being kept fully informed about every development in the different war-zones, indeed the final success was largely due to the carrying out of the plans he elaborated in Peking on the basis of his generals' reports. Cannons also proved of great service. They were cast under the direction of the Flemish Jesuit Verbiest on whom the mantle of Adam von Schall had descended with all the amplitude of its sacerdotal folds. Like Schall, he was primarily in charge of the Peking Observatory and all it entailed of mathematical knowledge and the making of astronomical instruments of greater precision than those in use before. Like Schall, too, the skill he showed in the casting of astrolabes and armillaries led to his being considered competent to instruct the Chinese in Christian Europe's

master-craft, the casting of the most murderous war instruments yet invented.

The experiment proved successful. Over 300 cannons were turned out. The tests which took place at the Western Hills, with 23,000 balls hitting the target, delighted K'ang Hsi so much he then and there, before his whole Court, took off his sable vest and coat and bestowed them on the venerable father. Shortly afterwards "a honorific title like that of deserving Viceroy" was added to the much-coveted one of Ta Yen (Great Man), which he had already received. Whatever twinges may have pricked his missionary conscience about supplying such formidable arms to the unbaptized were laid to rest by a very simple device.

"He erected an altar with a crucifix in the foundry" before which in surplice and stole he prostrated himself nine times, "beating the ground with his head." He then placed his cannon under holy patronage by giving each piece the name of an orthodox Christian Saint, "himself tracing the characters that were to be engraved." So rebels and devils were brought low and Jesuits to honour.

That the promising beginning of cannon-casting they made was later on not sufficiently encouraged to keep pace with the phenomenal progress it experienced in Europe seems partly to have been due to the unpopularity of artillery with the Manchu bannermen jealous of their renown for personal bravery, for their old inherited skill with bows and swords. These, rather than the clumsy cannon cast by Huang Taiki, had won them China and did as a matter of fact only need comparatively slight assistance from Jesuit artillery to be able to cope with every one of the enemies that faced the Manchus for the next 100 years.

In contradistinction to the civil administration which was purely Chinese in origin and largely worked by Chinese, even in the highest posts a Chinese holding the appointment conjointly with a Manchu, the army in its spirit, organization and appearance remained distinctly Manchu, the natural focus and outlet for the pristine vigour which had carried a tribe of hunters from the bleakness of the Long White Mountains to the splendour of the Dragon Throne. In the process, Nurhachu's little troop of 130 horsemen had expanded into an army of 400,000, the number of men K'ang Hsi employed against the rebel princes.

Under Ch'ien Lung, for garrison and field work almost one million men were under arms. Such a multitude could of course not be raised only from the Manchu clans. Mongols and



Northern Chinese who acknowledged the Ch'ing Dynasty long before 1644 provided the earliest additional recruits and were granted the distinction of being enrolled in eight banners like the Manchus and holding only a slightly less privileged position. Army corps, levied from the Chinese submitting after 1644, were organized in camps called Green from the colour of their flag. Regular drills and inspections, frequent frontier campaigns plus the stick, the whip, and the death penalty kept up discipline with the same efficiency that pervaded the other state services. "The least rust on muskets, sabres, arrows, cuirasses and helmets was severely punished." Consequently at reviews and on the march soldiers "made a handsome appearance."

Well equipped, regularly paid and in peace-time often allowed to follow a trade, enlistment in their ranks was regarded as a privilege of the fortunate, not as the last resort of the down-at-heels.

The higher commands were entrusted to great lords of the Empire, surrounded with much pomp and dignity and carrying considerable power and responsibility. Yet never so much as to become a source of danger to the dynasty.

Supreme authority was skilfully balanced between a War office and an Army board, while the Exchequer controlled the important question of pay and an assistant superintendent drawn from the civil service stood at the generals' elbows to nip in the bud any desire these might feel to wave about too freely. Effective measures were also taken to check the predatory instincts of the lower ranks. A viceroy returning in 1683 from the South was taken down no less than five degrees for having allowed his men to rob and molest the civil population after the conclusion of hostilities.

The main preventive of military lawlessness, regular and adequate pay, was now also at hand, for the first time, since in the early years of Manchu expansion, the resources of their own country were totally insufficient for feeding as big an army as the conquest required, while the conquered government was a hopelessly bankrupt concern.

Efforts to make it again a paying one were severely hampered on the one side by the lengthy resistance set up by Ming claimants, by pirates and brigands, finally by Wu San-kuei and the other Chinese princes; on the other hand, by the incompetence and rapacity of individual Manchus like Duke Ao Pai. With the wealth of the South no longer dissipated by over-grown viceroys but flowing freely into the Emperor's treasury, the budget could now at last be balanced. To prevent the extravagance this sudden increase made so tempting, the Emperor

insisted on the Board of Revenue giving him a strict account of all items received as often as every tenth day. Besides, he drastically cut down the fantastic sums professedly consumed by the Palace kitchen and the department for the entertainment of foreign envoys. The hordes of female, eunuch and ecclesiastical parasites who had sponged on his father with a voracity reminiscent of the worst days of Wan Li had already been swept out and whereas the unfortunate Shun Chih had to support 9,000 ladies in the Palace, K'ang Hsi kept their number down to 500. He also saw to that great asset of centralization, the safety and good condition of roads and waterways.

As soon as he could spare the funds, that is in 1684, after the South had been thoroughly pacified, he devoted  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million taels to repairs and improvements on the Imperial Canal. The work, though planned and carried out on a huge scale, was completed in three years, and greatly facilitated the transport of the payments from the provinces to the capital; no small matter, where even the money taxes were unwieldy with weight and bulk. Long caravans of mules, each carrying 1,000 taels of solid silver in iron-clamped kegs, would wind their way for days and weeks from Canton to Peking.

Similarly, multitudes of men and animals, carts and barges were required to move the vast loads of taxes in kind, for the capital received or expected to receive annually more than 40 million sacks of rice, wheat and millet, each sack weighing 120 pounds, 210,000 bags of beans, over 1 million 50-pound loaves of salt,  $22\frac{1}{2}$  million bundles of straw, 600,000 pounds of wrought and unwrought silks, nearly 1 million pieces of linen and cotton cloth, and dozens of rolls of velvets, satins and brocades, also lacquer, spices, herbs, fruit, wine, wild and tame fowl, venison, fish, oxen, sheep, pigs, in specified but large quantities.

Only an infinitesimal fraction of this abundance was spent by K'ang Hsi on his Court, because, except for the sake of impressive representation, he thoroughly believed in keeping up the old Manchurian simplicity, and his own life was too full of serious work and interests for him to care to have it littered up with luxuries. Those 40 million sacks of rice and wheat went to keep a good reserve in the public granaries, to partly pay the civil officials, to feed the army, foreign embassies, Crown pensioners, priests, the populations of whole provinces when smitten by famine, and together with the animals brought in and the herbs, the fruit, the silks, to provide for offerings in the sanctuaries.

Another part of the resources at his disposal K'ang Hsi put to the wisest use imaginable, the development of the mair



producer of resources, human skill and industry. Machine mad modernists often accuse China of failing properly to exploit her natural wealth, which may be true as regards such minor matters as coal or metal mines. They overlook the fact that in the far more vital question of giving full scope to the creative instinct, the manual dexterity of her peoples, she easily puts or used to put half Asia and the whole of Europe and America to utter shame. K'ang Hsi's genius for grasping the essential made him see that if the heaving, hungry multitudes now brought under his dominion were to be kept prosperous, contented and voluntarily obedient, neither moral teaching nor vigilant policing were sufficient by themselves.

A third thing was needed, an outlet for the imagination in work not merely remunerative but beautiful, therefore both stimulating and satisfying, in fact art-crafts had to be pulled out of the state of coma into which the long spell of political trouble had thrown them.

K'ang Hsi belonged to those who no sooner see a thing than they get it started.

The bones of the last great disturber of peace, Wu San-kuei, were still on exhibit on various city walls when work was in full swing in the twenty-seven shops for the manufacture of enamels, lacquer, glass, gem-cutting, embroidery, carving, bronze casting and so on which the Emperor in fearless confidence of victory had opened within the Palace precincts in 1680.

The same year he had sent one of his household officials to Ching Tê Chên to make the Imperial factory there rise out of its ashes and the porcelain industry out of its depression. This task was carried out with all the vigour and efficiency characteristic of the reign. Instead of as heretofore requisitioning labour for the manufacture and the transport of goods, skilled artisans were attracted by regular and adequate wages. The material needed and the expenses of carriage to Peking were paid for out of money drawn from the Imperial Exchequer, a system which as the local chronicle gratefully remarks "benefited alike officials and common people and considerably improved the processes of manufacture."

The ground having been thus prepared two years later, in 1682, T'ang Ying-hsuan was placed in charge of the Imperial factory. Under his extraordinarily able management in the words of T'ang Ying, a later and equally famous director, "the God of the Furnace Blast laid his fingers on the designs and protected the porcelain in the kiln, so that it naturally came out perfect." "The earth used was unctuous, the

material lustrous and thin," potting, forms, glaze and decoration, all equally excellent. "There was no grudging either of labour or expense, so that the ware turned out improved daily."

Wonderful yellows, greens, purples, blacks, powder and turquoise blue were produced and applied singly or in combination of three or five colours ; even the gorgeous ruby red of Ming fame was resuscitated from its long eclipse. Ming blue and white likewise experienced a magnificent revival, attaining unsurpassable levels of perfection. Soon with steadily increasing home and foreign demand 3,000 kilns instead of the fifty-eight in the best Ming days lit up the night sky with the glare of their flames.

The town expanded prodigiously and by 1712, when the French Jesuit Entrecolles, combining a lively interest in the secrets of porcelain manufacture with zeal for the propagation of his dogmas, lived there, it numbered a million inhabitants.

There was work for all from the crippled and the blind, earning their daily bread by grinding colours, to artists and artisans of the most consummate skill and technical knowledge often owned by one family only, and handed down, jealously guarded, from father to son. Entrecolles expressed admiring amazement at the order maintained among such multitudes. One reason was of course that there were no idlers among them ; the other that the "government officials were carefully selected" and "gave money even in excess of market prices, so that the people came to work eagerly."

And what happened in ceramics occurred along the whole line of industries. The return of confidence due to the assurance that a big heart and powerful brain were watching over the welfare of the empire, everywhere guided energy back to the channels where it could spend itself profitably and happily, creating permanent values instead of wasting itself in futile quarrels and criminal destructions.

It was no idle boast ; it was an incentive to all when K'ang Hsi wrote in 1696 : "I the Emperor from early dawn to late at night diligently seek how to rule well."

The sentence opens his preface to the new edition he brought out of an old Sung book illustrating the most important stages of husbandry and sericulture. Called "Pictures of Ploughing and Weaving" (Kêng Chi Tu), it had been composed more than 540 years earlier by Lu Shu, a magistrate loving the people entrusted to his care and something of a poet as well as of an artist, for to each picture he added a song to lighten the labourers' toil. Multiplied by wood block and stone printing it



enjoyed a wide popularity, seems to have become the model for a similar work from the greater brush of Chao Mêng Fu and was reprinted in 1462. But it was a copy of the older, rarer and more valuable Sung edition which prominent scholars of Kiangnan presented to K'ang Hsi on his second journey South in 1689.

To gratify the donors, as well as to follow the worthy Sung magistrate's example and encourage the toilers by showing intelligent appreciation of their work, K'ang Hsi contributed not only a preface but verses of his own to the sumptuous new edition with which he gave Lu Shu's book a fresh lease of life. In the midst of his immense burden of state affairs he found time to think of what peasant folk behind the plough and farmers' wives among their silkworms and mulberry-leaves might care to hum :

" When the days wax mild and warm, work starts on the land,  
Everywhere then everywhere nought but diligence and toil.  
For the eastern fields at dawn seeds are sifted of the late and early  
corn ;  
Maidens tuck their skirts to wade in water, wetting baskets of  
bamboo."

This is the first of the forty-six songs he added to the old ones. They, but especially the pictures which they accompanied, enjoyed the widest popularity from the moment they were published, early in 1696.

By then the magic of his personality and his taste for letters had begun to thaw the scholars out of the stiff reserve towards his dynasty, into which they had been frozen by their loyalty to the former one and their sorrow at the eclipse of national independence. Since with the dying down of war-shouts, their gentle voice could again make itself heard and followed, it was a matter of paramount importance for the Manchus to induce them to raise it in their favour and persuade public opinion that the time had come to forgive and forget.

The uneducated masses K'ang Hsi had already won. On his progress South, they thronged to catch a glimpse of this handsome young Emperor " who far from concealing himself " as the latter Mings had done " gave every one the liberty of approaching him." In a flood of enthusiasm they spread silks and carpets on his road, erected triumphal arches, burnt incense before his horse, brought their humble offerings, " Shan-tung peasants a wild boar, others small black loaves in the skirt of their coat " ; the poorest a little corn or fruit. " When he refused, so as to save them expense, they wept and forced

him by their tears to accept their trifles, that they might not feel uneasy, and went away well satisfied if he did but take a few grains of rice."

On this same southern progress K'ang Hsi went out of his way to bestow signal marks of his favour on the Jesuits, even deputing three high officials to prostrate themselves before the altar of a Jesuit church and give twenty taels to the priest in charge. It is hard to say whether he did this purely in recognition of the valuable services they were rendering in astronomy, map-making, the casting of cannon, or with the idea of putting the Chinese scholars on their mettle by showing them there were rivals in the field, who might deprive them of all influence at Court, if they continued sulking in a corner.

Be this as it may, sulking and aloofness were abandoned and loyal acceptance of the new order of things became the watchword of the day in a spirit of conciliation which K'ang Hsi ably maintained by keeping the eager industry of the learned fully and most congenially employed.

He set them two important tasks ; the one, to initiate the young generation and every Manchu aspiring to official posts into the discipline of the great tradition they represented ; the other, to collect, and classify, condensing or enlarging, the most enduring substance on which this tradition rested, its language, records, and literature. Monumental works were undertaken and completed between 1710 and 1727, a dictionary containing 44,449 characters, a concordance in 200, an encyclopædia in 1,628 volumes, an anthology of T'ang poetry containing 48,900 lyrics. At the same time he had the translation of the Classics into Manchu, begun under Shun Chih, completed, and an exhaustive thesaurus of the Manchu language compiled, so as to preserve it for all time from the extinction of which it apparently was already thus early showing dangerous signs under the crushing weight of Chinese speech. As to the Jesuits, he gave them full opportunity to let their erudition shine by entrusting them with the arduous labour of drawing up accurate maps of this great geographical and spiritual fact that had arisen out of the chaos of Ming decay—the Sino-Tartar Empire of the Ch'ings.

Thus with the tenth of his sixteen maxims well obeyed and every one happy because suitably employed, and consequently with a compact, contented country behind him, he could free his foreign policy from all weak-kneed temporizing. He was, however, far too great a statesman and too averse to fighting merely in pursuit of those death-head phantoms, national glory and military fame, to close the door to conciliation and com-



promise where these served his paramount aim, the inviolability of his frontiers.

With Burmah, Annam, Tonking quiescent, with Portuguese and Spanish power visibly declining ; with Dutch energy compelled to fight French aggression at home and still vividly remembering the blows dealt it by Koxinga, limiting itself to humble petitions for permission to trade and to the maintenance of its East Indian possessions ; with British expansionism still in the throes of cutting its teeth ; with Japan deliberately retiring from all foreign complications to concentrate on self-development ; with Korea a loyal vassal, the only serious danger to be faced threatened from the North and North-West, that old bad-weather corner, aggravated by one chronic complication, Tibetan piety, and one new one, Russian Imperialism.

The latter with its heavy seven-league boots had in an incredibly short time marched across the length of Siberia to the banks of the Amur and all along its route started to play the master, bullying natives, building forts, butchering the fur-bearing animals. In 1651 it first collided with the Manchus, who, taken by surprise and numerically inferior, were beaten. Fresh troops dispatched the following year by Shun Chih to wipe out this disgrace, were wiped out instead themselves.

Engrossed by the more urgent task of consolidating their hold on China, the Manchus could do nothing effective to curb Russian encroachments. Consequently these soared into reckless crescendos. Russian ships navigated on Manchu rivers, Manchu hunters were robbed and slain on their own grounds, letters of protest sent to the Court of Moscow left unread and unanswered.

But with the successful close of internal conflict K'ang Hsi could turn his attention to an equally energetic settling of these northern troubles. A military governorship was established on the Manchurian frontier with head-quarters at Aigun on the bank of the Amur. War-junks manœuvred on the river, 10,000 men and 200 guns were mobilized and the Russian palisades systematically destroyed.

One fort, Albazin, on the Amur above Aigun, more strongly built than the others, put up a determined resistance, but was finally also captured and dismantled. To prevent this episode giving the Russians a welcome pretext for adding their quota to the conflagration just then ablaze in Mongolia, K'ang Hsi ordered the captured garrison of 450 men to be treated with the utmost consideration.

“ Those willing to return to their own country were supplied with all things necessary for their journey, the others conducted

to Peking " and allowed to live there in great comfort, " even being granted the privilege of enrolment in the Banner organization."

" The Russian Commander was so overcome by the Emperor's clemency he shed tears of gratitude." Nevertheless, they had barely dried on his cheeks, when he was back at his old game. He rebuilt the ruined stronghold, waylaid Manchu soldiers, kidnapped and robbed Manchu hunters. Whereupon the Manchu frontier forces once more besieged Albazin and were on the point of taking it, when the negotiations, previously begun for substituting rational neighbourliness for jungle savagery, were brought to a successful conclusion.

At Nerchinsk, in the frontier zone above the disputed fort, the envoys of these two new powers, the Manchu and the Russian, met in September, 1689, and seem to have taken each other's measure with remarkable accuracy. K'ang Hsi's plenipotentiaries were accompanied by two Jesuits, Pereira and Gerbillon, who acted as interpreters and drew up the Latin text of the treaty, also written in Chinese and Russian. Its six articles, unlike those of most treaties, were framed with such a knowledge of actual conditions and respect for reason and fair play that they were kept and peace preserved for practically two centuries. The frontier line agreed on ran along the Shih ta hsing an, in Russian the Stanovoi Mountain range, all its rivers flowing South falling under Manchu, the northern under Russian dominion. The lower Amur basin was thus preserved for China and energetically colonized by K'ang Hsi, as the best safeguard against Muscovite expansionism. That Peter the Great (1689-1725) turned most of this westwards no doubt also considerably facilitated the establishment and maintenance of friendly relations with his great Far Eastern neighbour.

The third article condemned the troublesome fort Albazin to be demolished and evacuated by all Russian settlers.

Thus one of the northern problems was happily solved.

The other, the Mongolian-Tibetan one, presented far graver difficulties, so grave indeed, two whole generations had to wrestle with them, and the final settlement was reached only under K'ang Hsi's grandson Ch'ien Lung.

The root of the trouble reached as far down as the grave of Jenghis Khan. His restless ghost still walked the steppes, where he had dreamed such dazzling dreams as a youth and achieved such gigantic conquests as a man. Among those who spoke his language, who gazed out of the same dark tents into the same mirage-haunted horizons, there would from time to time arise one who fancied he also had the call to turn dazzling



dreams into tangible reality. Then the old frenzy of galloping, shouting, fighting would shake the steppe, spilling its red foam over into China and Turkestan. Towns would be burnt, thousands perish in pursuit of the dream of Jenghis Khan. Sometimes for years.

But in the end the dream would dissolve and the dreamer drop down dead somewhere, an assassin's dagger in his side. For he had troubled the peace of the steppe and it was peace the riders of the steppe, Buddha's message in their heart, now desired as fervently as their ancestors had wanted war. They looked on the world through a haze of incense smoke and the gold which glittered in their Temples on the great days of festival, was the only gold they craved to see. Therefore the fulcrum of the power that could set them and keep them in motion had shifted from the warriors' camp to the monasteries of Tibet.

Now during the time that China was buying peace from her home-bred brigands by submission to Manchu discipline, about 1645, there was born to the Khan of the West Mongolian Dzungars or Oelöts a son Galdan, who in a fateful manner combined the ability of a general with the astuteness of a priest. He began as a priest, having like many sons of Mongol chiefs been sent to Lhasa as a boy to acquire merit for the whole clan by becoming a monk. He reached the rank of a Chutuktu, roughly corresponding to that of a Roman cardinal, and giving him a voice in the inner Councils of the Lama Church.

About 1643, under Lo-zang, its fifth Dalai, that Church had, with the armed assistance of the West Mongolian Gushi Khan of Koko Nor, beaten down its worldly adversaries, turned the old royal palace-fort into the grand Lamassery of Potala and added full temporal sovereignty over Tibet to all its spiritual authority. Consequently it ranked as a first-class power and the Manchus eagerly sought its friendship.

In 1651 Shun Chih invited Lo-zang to Peking. The Pontiff on his side, perhaps as a make-weight to his Mongolian patron, was anxious to be on good terms with the Manchus and came gladly. There was a grand exchange of gifts and titles. The patents and seals by which the Ming Emperors had conferred similar distinctions on his predecessors, were returned by Lo-zang and new ones asked for in token of full recognition of Manchu sovereignty. Shun Chih's leanings towards Buddhism also served as a bond of union between the two powers.

With K'ang Hsi, whose active mind responded far more readily to Confucian ethics and Jesuit science than to Buddhist fervour the chances of Lamas skimming the cream off the milk

of Imperial favour in Peking as they had done under the Yüans and had begun to do again under Shun Chih, sank to zero, with a corresponding rise of temperature in the animosity felt by the Pontifex Maximus against an Emperor so lost to the call of the salvation his priests had to offer. He fell to brooding over schemes by which the power of this lost soul could be curtailed. Wu San-kuei's rebellion seemed a heaven-sent opportunity, and he did his best to make it succeed by inciting the Mongols to march on Peking. But K'ang Hsi's marching was swifter. They failed, so did the southern rebellion.

The holy man at Lhasa had to devise another line of attack.

Most opportunely Galdan came to his hand or rather to that of his chief minister the Desi Sangji Gjamtzo, an ambitious schemer, said to have been his son. In Galdan's home the reigning Khan Sênghe, Galdan's own brother, having murdered a stepbrother, was in his turn slain by his victim's son and brother. These also getting killed, and Sênghe's three sons being too young to rule, Galdan, released of his monastic vows by the Dalai Lama, became Sênghe's successor. Not to run any risks, he celebrated his return by having two of his nephews sent to a better world. The third escaped with the loss of an eye, for which in time he came to exact a great revenge.

But the wicked Uncle was first to enjoy a meteoric career of military fame. Hami, Turfan, Kashgar, Yarkand, Samarkand, Bokhara, altogether 1,200 towns felt the strength of his sword. The great trade-routes to the West were at his mercy. On the East his Oelöts were neighbours to the Khalkas, another Mongolian tribe; disputes a frequent occurrence.

Divided among themselves, some Khalkas paid the Manchus the tribute of the nine whites, that is eight white horses and one white camel, but only when they either feared or needed them. Tushetu was their most powerful Khan, backed by his Lama brother, a pink-cheeked, fat-paunched Chutuktu, residing at Urga, where Chinese workmen had with Chinese material built him a splendid temple. He spent eight years in Lhasa and struck by the advantage of a Dalai Lama's position, returned to his Mongols with the ambition of diverting to his own obese person the reverence which they paid his Tibetan colleague. This ambition, complicated by Galdan's conquering proclivities, did not tend to make the relations between the Mongol leaders pleasanter.

Eventually they grew so envenomed, a council of pacification was called, to which both K'ang Hsi and the Dalai Lama sent delegates. Those of the latter, however, only represented the Desi Sangji Gjamtzo, sole ruler at Lhasa, since Lo-zang's



death, an event which occurred in 1682. But the Regent and his abettors, fearing a new Dalai might choose a new set of advisers, kept it a profound secret, and gave out that Lo-zang, desirous of acquiring supreme illumination, had withdrawn to the upper part of his temple palace, leaving them in charge on the lower levels of practical government. To strengthen belief in this story, the devout were on great occasions shown a venerable figure in full pontificals gazing down on them from behind flowing gauze curtains and a thick smoke-screen of incense, which convinced them they had been granted a vision of their increasingly blessed Pontiff. Suspicions only arose years later.

Meanwhile, at the conference the Desi's delegate had to fight for the precedence due to him against the fat Chutuktu's pretensions. Neither did Galdan's representative have an easy time. He seems to have taken up the cudgels fairly literally for a minor Khalka Khan deprived of his lawful patrimony by Tushetu and his priestly brother.

The assembly ordered these two to restore it, which they promised to do and the delegates went home.

But the property was not restored. Instead, its legitimate owner was slain, and a brother of Galdan's treated the same way.

Galdan was drinking tea when this black news was brought him. Trembling with indignation he spilled the cup and scalded his hand—a bad omen. But he did not heed it and swore never to rest till his brother's murderers lay in chains at his feet. In 1688 he invaded their territory, burnt and harried it frightfully, not even respecting the pagodas, and drove the Khan, the Chutuktu and what was left of their subjects out, a panic-stricken mob seeking safety and protection on Chinese soil.

K'ang Hsi appealed to Lhasa to mediate, but Lhasa supported Galdan's demand for the unconditional surrender of his two great enemies. This could not be conceded without serious loss of prestige, the more so as in their extremity the Khalkas had volunteered to become his vassals, an offer impossible to refuse. Consequently, notwithstanding his genuine love of peace, K'ang Hsi found himself pushed into the position of protector to the Khalkas and saddled with a war on their aggressors. With accustomed energy and foresight he at once took all the measures the new situation required, hastened the peace negotiations with Russia, ordered the allied "Mongols from Liao Tung to the end of the Great Wall to hold themselves in readiness on their frontiers," guarded the principal

mountain passes with his own forces, mobilized three large field armies. Perhaps he also got into touch with Galdan's home enemies. Certainly the surviving one-eyed nephew Ts'êwang Araptan became active shortly afterwards and proved a useful ally.

Galdan, on his side, in the full flush of his sweeping victory over the Khalkas, saw in it an earnest of further victories over foes even more detested and more worth destroying. On the trail of Jenghis Khan he flung himself against the descendants of those Nûchêns whose empire his Mongol ancestors had wiped out of existence, scattered one of their armies, and master of the steppe, drew up his forces in battle array, squares of formidable camels, lines of well-armed soldiers in the marshy wilds of Wu lang pu t'ung, almost within sight of the Great Wall, a menace to both capitals, no more than some 200 miles between him and the gates either of Mukden or Peking.

For a moment the Manchu empire stood in deadly peril.

Had its second army been defeated like the first, the victorious Galdan might have dashed through the remaining lines of defence, rallied all doubtful friends and only recently cowed enemies of Manchu power to his side, with the support of Lhasa unchained Lama fanaticism against it and rekindled every old grudge and bitter memory left by the crushing of Wu San-kuei's rebellion. The whole work of conquest would then have had to be done over again and unhappy China been deluged once more with the blood and pus of war. But Galdan was no Jenghis Khan, and K'ang Hsi not the kind of Emperor whose generals are caught napping twice.

Wu lang pu t'ung was to mark the furthest point of the Oelöts' advance. In the battle fought there on the third of September, 1690, their camels were shot to pieces and stampeded, their soldiers driven into swift retreat.

Winter intervening, hostilities ceased. Not very long though. In spite of troubles from his Mahommedan vassals, acting in concert with his now openly hostile nephew, Galdan still demanded the delivery of his brother's murderers and busily prepared to renew his attack on their protector.

He laboured hard to arouse that patent stimulant to pugnaciousness, national vanity, among those Mongol tribes, whose forces he needed to supplement his own.

"What can be baser," he wrote to their chieftains, "than becoming slaves to those we once commanded? We are Mongols united under one law, and should combine to regain an empire which is our own and our ancestors' rightful possession. I will gladly share the glory and fruits of conquest with those ready to share its dangers with me."



But should any Mongol chieftain be so base as to permanently submit to our common foes the Manchus, he shall be the first to feel the sharpness of my arrows and his ruin be the prelude to the conquest of China."

But K'ang Hsi had already provided against any such Pan-Mongolian rising as this letter contemplates. Galdan himself had undermined its foundations when he allowed his unrestrained vindictiveness to drive the Khalkas into the arms of the Manchus.

The superiority of the far-sighted statesman over the impulsive vendetta leader showed itself nowhere more clearly than in the handling of that chief bone of contention between them, the hegemony of Mongolia.

In the great manoeuvres at Dolo Nor, the "seven lakes," to which K'ang Hsi convened the Khalkas and other Mongolian leaders in the summer of 1691, what with the charm of his personality, with lavish distributions of titles and presents, with feastings and huntings, with the display of Chinese splendour and Sino-Manchu military force, with promises swiftly followed by performance of the building and endowment of magnificent pagodas, he blazed his way into their hearts and made them his willing vassals. From that time, or at any rate from the moment Galdan had been finally defeated, Mongolia became as it were a glacis in front of the Great Wall, its man-power organized in banners, an outpost of the Chinese army, a strengthening of China's frontiers which made Ch'ien Lung's extensive conquests possible.

As a first result of the gathering at Dolo Nor Galdan found himself severely handicapped when the war recommenced in 1694. It is true he was well entrenched on the banks of the Kerulon and frightful miles of desert wastes had to be traversed before he could be attacked. But K'ang Hsi, at the head of the central army, marched right through them and though Galdan contrived to elude him by a swift westward movement, another Manchu army under the distinguished general Fei-yang-ku intercepted his route. At Chaomoto on the Tule he was utterly beaten, losing almost all his animals, 6,000 head of cattle, 5,000 camels, 10,000 horses, 70,000 sheep. He left 2,000 men dead on the field, 3,000 surrendered, the remainder fled westwards to Dzungaria.

There the persistent man tried to raise yet another army for yet another attempt at realizing the elusive dream of Jenghis Khan. But his call for a war to the finish against the Manchus ceased to draw. The Oelöts knew by now it did not as they had expected mean loot and glory, only weariness and wounds.

In ever greater numbers they deserted him for the nephew who promised them an easier time.

Nevertheless, K'ang Hsi deemed it prudent to organize a third expedition, which he himself led as far as Ning Hsia, between the extreme western extension of the Great Wall and the left bank of the Yellow River. There, in 1697, he heard that there was no further need of fighting. Galdan was dead—some said slain by his own hand, others that he had been murdered.

K'ang Hsi recognized Ts'êwang Araptan as Galdan's successor, looking on him as a loyal ally, which was perfectly true as long as a big Manchu army lay encamped at such close range as Ning Hsia. Its presence there also scared the Lhasa ruler to confess the deceit he had been practising for years about the Dalai Lama's death.

Unwilling to plunge into costly Tibetan troubles, the Emperor forgave him and accepted the new Dalai Lama whom Sangji Gjamtzo now had to install. Unfortunately this "precious Sage of an Ocean of Harmony," as he was called, being only fifteen, developed a keener sense for the privileges than for the responsibilities of his exalted position and found the composing of erotic songs more congenial than the chanting of solemn hymns. At last his behaviour grew so indiscreet, it caused an open scandal. A council of church dignitaries and diviners met to prove the delicate question whether a depraved voluptuary could really be considered an incarnation of Avalokitesvara. They decided that the great Bodhisattva's spirit had withdrawn from the "precious Sage of the Ocean of Harmony," leaving his sinful fleshly mind in sole possession. Yet they did not dare draw the practical consequence of their verdict, the unsaintly pontiff's deposition.

Whereupon Latsan, great-grandson of the Mongolian Khan Gushi, who had played the rôle of Charlemagne to the Holy See of Tibet and endowed it with temporal power, decided to end the scandal by main force. In 1705 he swept down on Lhasa, slew the old schemer, the Desi Sangji Gjamtzo, and carried off his nominee, who ended miserably of dropsy, or foul play somewhere on the road between Tibet and China. As his successor, Latsan Khan selected, or said Avalokitesvara's spirit had selected, a monk of twenty-five, Yeses, who was installed as Dalai Lama and whom Peking also acknowledged. Indeed, K'ang Hsi was pleased with this purging of Lhasa and sent the doughty Khan a golden seal and the flattering title of "Loyal protector of the Buddhist faith."

The dispossessed members of the old party, however, were considerably less pleased. Neither did Ts'êwang Araptan view



the resulting extension of Chinese influence with a friendly eye. Therefore they spread the idea that the last Dalai Lama could not possibly have been reincarnated in a grown-up monk; that, on the contrary, a baby of Li Tang in eastern Tibet, born in 1706, showed every mark of being the chosen vehicle for re-embodiment of the divine spirit. They then proceeded to set him up as Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan Church was plunged into a new scandal. As Latsan wanted to end it in his usual forceful way, and K'ang Hsi was appealed to by both sides, he had the baby taken to a monastery near the frontier town of Hsi Ning, well guarded by Chinese soldiers. This move infuriated Ts'êwang. Soon after Galdan's death he had realized it was one thing to be submissive to the Manchus while he was under-dog at home, and another to obey orders from Peking when top-dog among his own well-armed people. Systematically he set about increasing his resources, imported cultivators into the valley of the Ili, opened iron mines, cloth and arm factories and increased his immediately available forces to 60,000 well-drilled men. Thus equipped he insensibly drifted into his uncle's position of championship of Mongolian against Manchu power. Jenghis Khan's ghost had found a fresh incarnation.

The control of Lhasa was the first requisite for a successful renewal of Galdan's struggle with K'ang Hsi. Ts'êwang Araptan, playing a deep game, threw K'ang Hsi's ally Latsan Khan off his guard by giving his own daughter in marriage to Latsan's eldest son. On pretence of providing the young couple with a grand escort on their way back from Dzungaria, he marched strong columns of his 60,000 soldiers into Tibet. The attempt he and thirty-two Mongol chieftains of the Blue Lake made simultaneously on Hsi Ning to rescue their chosen Dalai Lama was thwarted by Chinese vigilance. But Latsan Khan was too busy drinking the health of bride and bridegroom to exercise similar watchfulness.

Consequently one cold November morning he woke up to find Lhasa surrounded by masses of fierce and most unfriendly Dzungars. Spurred on by their leader's promise of the loot of all the gold heaped up in the holy city, they had pushed forward by wild trails, past the Lake of Spirits, across rickety chain bridges, along narrow paths dizzily skirting the abyss, fearless, desperate, implacable foes. Nevertheless, the Potala, having been built with an eye to just such emergencies, Latsan Khan might have been able to keep them out, if treachery from within had not paralysed resistance, and allowed the hungry hordes to pour in. Latsan was killed, his Pope compelled to sink back into the lower ranks of monkhood, the fate of the Church placed

in Araptan's hands—rough and cruel robber hands, which where they should have dispensed protection and justice could do nothing but loot and slay. His soldiers wrought frightful havoc, many temples were not only plundered but destroyed, resisting Lamas sewn into sacks and deported to Dzungaria. Possibly Ts'êwang Araptan had some plan for shifting the papal seat from the inaccessible Potala to his own capital to keep it permanently under Oelöt control.

But it is also possible that in the joy of looting and killing he forgot every other consideration and blindly stumbled into the same mistake his uncle had committed when his ruthlessness drove the Khalkas into the arms of the Manchus.

To the Lamas, trying to hide their treasures from Dzungar greed and their tonsured heads from Dzungar knives, the Manchus, whom their great emperors had made the bearers of Confucian self-restraint and political wisdom, inevitably appeared as benign saviours. The vast majority of the Mongols, too, horrified at the Oelöts' sacrilegious sack of their holy of holies, felt that in the choice placed before them between the leadership of Ts'êwang Araptan who was destroying and of K'ang Hsi who was building lamasseries, there was no room for hesitation. To encourage this favourable mood, K'ang Hsi now acknowledged the nominee of the Blue Lake Mongols as the legitimate Dalai Lama and asked them to add their forces to his to escort the young pontiff to Lhasa and clear out the Oelöt robbers. But as these happened besides to be war-seasoned soldiers and the country presented immense difficulties, two years of strenuous effort were needed before the desired result could be achieved. The first attempt miscarried completely, the army which invaded Tibet from Hsi Ning in 1718 being almost annihilated on the banks of the Black Water (Chara Ussu). But its remnants brought back the experience which enabled the second blow to strike straight home. In September, 1720, 100,000 Chinese and 30,000 Mongol soldiers marched into Lhasa. Peace and order were restored, the Oelöts, discredited and defeated, cleared out of the country, the higher posts of the hierarchy bestowed on trustworthy men, mostly old adherents of Latsan Khan, their own and their successors' appointments subjected to Imperial control, with ecclesiastical and temporal functions again strictly separated. An universally acknowledged Pontiff, the young Dalai Lama released from Hsi Ning and enthroned as "The Ocean of Wisdom and Bliss," again officiated at Potala. The days of scandals and schism were over. K'ang Hsi's autograph record of this joyful event was engraved on a stone tablet put up at



Lhassa, not in idle boastfulness, only fittingly to mark its importance. The destruction of Ts'êwang Araptan's schemes, the tranquillization and taming of Tibetan Lamaism did actually represent an immense gain to Chinese power and prestige, the triumph of K'ang Hsi's statesmanship crowning as a fully earned reward years of unremitting toil.

From the tender age of eight, when other boys play, he was already at work fitting himself for the huge task of ruling, reconciling, reconstructing. To control his officials, to get into direct touch with his people, to protect the frontiers, he travelled vast distances from Peking, six times to the cities on the Yangtze, once across the Gobi desert to the Kerulon and across the Yellow River to Ning Hsia, yearly to the wilds of Manchuria and Mongolia. There alone did he allow himself a holiday with full indulgence in his favourite pastime, hunting, though even that was so strenuous, hours in the saddle, rough fare, rough trails, rough camping, with a large spice of danger from tigers and bears and stumbling mounts, important dispatches studied and decided on, the answers sent off by swift couriers at the end of a whole day's hunting, besides the entertaining of Mongol princes and Lamas, the start never later than an hour or two before dawn, the return never earlier than sunset, one realizes by how much his vital power transcended average measures.

Though a patron of books and of learning, he was essentially a being of the open air, a lover of boundless skies and rustling woods and tumbling waters, never happier than when away from the pressure of walls, walls of brick and of sandalwood, of routine and etiquette, away among northern hills and valleys, filling his lungs with oxygen and his mind with the grandeur of the untamed earth. The predominance of simple majestic shapes and vibrant greens in the porcelains made under his reign may well be due to his personal taste for woodlore and the mystery of vast and verdant forest grounds. He probably would have turned with disgust from the over-candied effemina-cies of the famille rose so much the fashion a hundred years later.

Court painters drew and the Court Jesuit Gerbillon wrote vivid pictures of these hunting expeditions—which though lacking the boisterous splendour of Kublai Khan's, what with nobles, princes, guests, horse-guards, falconers, hunters, grooms, camel-drivers, cooks, chamberlains, did set just as many men in motion. The tents, numbering a good 2,000, took up entire valleys. Those of the soldiers formed the outer row “pitched so close they made a kind of wall which blocked the passage and left only one opening in the middle to serve as a gate,” of

course well guarded. "In the middle of the enclosure were the officers' tents and those of their servants, each according to his rank in exact order with their standards." Next "tents of the grandees, tents of officers of the Emperor's Household"; finally "in the North-North-East extremity of the camp," separated from it by a triple enclosure, the last one square and screened by hangings of coarse yellow cloth about seven feet high, the tent of the Emperor of the usual Tartar type, round, covered with Chinese stuffs inside and white felt outside, only the larger size and the gold embroidery at the top differentiating it from the others.

Near it were the tents of "such of his children as bore him company in the journey." He was a fond father and through Gerbillon's pen we catch a delightful glimpse of him riding back to camp from the stag-hunt, late in the evening twilight, bow and quiver at his girdle, his ten-year-old son close behind him on a pony and in proud possession of "a little bow and a small quiver of arrows."

He was a magnificent shot, never missing a pheasant or quail on the wing, one morning killing three wild boars, another twenty-two stags and sending his arrows off with such force they would penetrate deep into the animal's body though only "tipped with bone as blunt as a finger."

He was also good at fishing, "throwing and casting net himself with great agility," and hardier than those with him always particularly relished.

Gerbillon relates one somewhat trying experience:

"One day about noon it began to rain. But this did not prevent His Majesty from dining in the open field as usual after he had dressed his meat as leisurely as if it had been the finest weather in the world. His presence and example obliged all the rest to do the same. . . ." "We returned to camp wet through, and the rain lasted till nightfall, when a strong north wind arose, making the temperature bitterly cold."

But the keenness of the air, the magnificence of the scenery, the excitement of the chase richly rewarded for every hardship. Among the worthy Father's happiest recollections was the afternoon meal, generally taken about two o'clock, at which the Emperor delighted in himself cutting, preparing and roasting the stag's liver "according to ancient Tartar custom, which he observed as much as possible to keep his people in exercise." He would "divide it among his sons, sons-in-law and highest officers, and every one then applying himself to roast his piece of meat after the Emperor's example." Repeatedly he did Gerbillon "the honour of giving him a piece with his own



hand." Once he sent him a specially prepared syrup insisting on his "drinking it out of his own cup." Among the hunters venison and bear's flesh were also freely distributed, while on the great festival of the autumn moon the grandees and Court officials received cakes and water-melons, all others down to servants and soldiers a gift of wine and arrack.

To the Mongol and Khalkas princes who came to pay their respects, the Emperor would distribute the greatest part of the game with his own hand, also arrange special feasts for them, their wives and their lamas, the feast consisting of "tables loaded with large joints of roasted and boiled meat," displays of wrestling after the repast. Rolls of silk and robes of honour would also be given them, money, cloth and tea to their retainers, all in pursuance of that policy of conciliation he played off so successfully against Galdan's iron fist. He can scarcely have found much pleasure in the companionship of these unkempt, illiterate descendants of Kublai Khan. Gerbillon describes their appearance as "hideous," their food as disgusting, their manners as repulsive, even their silken vests as "unbecoming," mostly "very old and sullied with grease, for these gentlemen use no other napkins but their own garments and make no difficulty after eating fat soup, of wiping their mouths with their sleeves."

K'ang Hsi's wider philosophy no doubt took less offence at such external failings. Indeed, his good humour on these glorious hunting trips seems to have been proof against anything.

Once a page boy fell from his horse while aiming at a stag and his arrow grazed the Emperor's ear. He got off with nothing worse than a fatherly admonition to be more careful next time. On another occasion K'ang Hsi gave up the supreme sport of tiger-hunting, because it threatened to endanger the beaters' lives.

He would shoot at a butt in friendly rivalry "with the best marksmen of his train," and on the journey to his beloved woodlands visit the soldiers' houses at the Ku Pei Kou Gate of the Great Wall, rest at farmers' cottages and "inform himself most minutely about their crops and the different grain they grew."

The hunting was of course unrivalled, and the abundance of game carefully kept up by severe prohibitions against all tillage or poaching within the reserved area. It covered thousands of acres. To the peasant, seeing no further than his own millet patch, this seemed reckless extravagance. But it was, on the contrary, the surest and most economical way of accomplishing

two objects of infinitely greater importance than the quantitative increase of tilled fields. One was the preservation of forests which in their turn preserving soil and moisture on the hills prevented that dangerous denudation and consequent silting up of river-beds which now scourges the ploughlands of the plain with alternate droughts and floods.

The second was the comparatively harmless outlet the hunting of the game in these forests provided for the itch to kill of which the Manchus, like other conquering races, had not yet had time to free themselves. Only a few decades ago their ancestors had revelled in tribal wars and the cutting off of enemies' heads as a glorious pastime. Suddenly to transform full-blooded fighters into calm, considerate, self-controlled gentlemen was no easy task and could never have been achieved without allowing their animal spirits the safety-valve of so virile a sport as the Imperial hunts supplied. Without it, they might well again have run amok among the defenceless people in the way that had disgraced Duke Ao Pai's regency, seriously hampering the work of pacification.

Even so, Manchu princelings would sometimes take the bit of Chinese etiquette, with which their first Emperor had already tried to tame them, between their strong, gleaming teeth and lash out right and left in kicks of lawless violence. Several of K'ang Hsi's own sons, to whom power and position proved too heady a drink, reverted to the manners in vogue among the young bloods of Nurhachu's bivouacs.

The second, Yun Jen, chosen as Heir-Apparent because his mother was an Empress, although, according to Gerbillon, a tall, well-made youth with an engaging countenance on whose education every conceivable care had been bestowed, reverted to unrestrained savagery. He would sleep all day and carouse all night, drinking excessively, quake with terror at the sound of thunder, even of a heavy downpour, mutter like a lunatic, never sit still, lose all sense of moral responsibility, and indulge in "fiendish cruelty and unholy lust." His inordinate extravagance also lured him to abuse his position for raising money in every kind of dishonourable manner, "blackmailing Viceroys and Governors, extorting bribes from local officials, appropriating to his own use tribute destined for his father, helping himself out of the Imperial Treasury," bullying, even actually beating princes and ministers who dared to check his mad career.

His bad example infected several of his brothers. Between them they kept the Palace officials high and low in a constant state of terror. Their households became the happy hunting-



ground " of scheming, illiterate persons, who misbehaved and ill-treated the people and of gangs of desperate villains who levied tribute on the country-side, committed many acts of violence and robbery, and spied on the Emperor's movements " undoubtedly with sinister intentions.

As K'ang Hsi was getting on in years, his heir and the succession grew in importance. Intriguers and soothsayers began their mischievous work among his twenty-four sons and everything went from bad to worse.

In 1708 matters came to a head. A plot had been detected against the Emperor's life and the evidence obtained justified the suspicion that the Prince Imperial, impatient of ascending the throne, knew something about it. Nor could the complaints brought against him by the ministers whom he had insulted and flogged and his total unfitness for the throne be ignored any longer. At the time K'ang Hsi was hunting in the beautiful grounds of Jehol, but could find no comfort even there. For six sleepless nights he fought out the question with himself and his conscience as to how this personal calamity could be prevented from growing into a national one. When he had found the answer, he summoned the offending Prince and before the assembled Court decreed his deposition and arrest. Not without an effort. He had been very fond of him and wept bitterly while passing sentence. Some advised the death penalty, but K'ang Hsi's heart and sager counsellors prevented this extreme measure. With the Empress-Dowager's sanction the ex-Crown Prince was merely kept in confinement. He never regained his liberty, but died unfree and unwept in 1725, with a brother on the throne that was to have been his.

K'ang Hsi's next trial was the sorting of the other black sheep among his sons and finding one white enough to be worthy of the succession, a serious problem, as most were either " excitable, obstinate " and insolent, or cunning, treacherous and ambitious.

Many painful domestic scenes ensued. At one of them a particularly obstreperous prince was whipped and afterwards together with an equally insubordinate brother cast bodily out of the Palace.

His fourth son, Ying Chen, created Prince Yung, whom he finally nominated, as being " very like him," on the whole justified the choice made, though the resemblance did not go nearly as deep as the fond father imagined.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### YUNG CHENG

**W**ARNED by bitter experience, K'ang Hsi refused to create another Crown Prince during his lifetime and made his selection only known on his death-bed.

It was the time of the winter solstice that he passed away from the world he had bettered so much. While hunting south of Peking he suddenly fell ill and never having spared himself seems to have had no reserve strength with which to fight sickness. Carried to his favourite residence, the Garden of Bright Spring, he seemed at first to rally. But before the dawn of 20th December, breathless couriers summoned Prince Yung from the Temple of Heaven where, deputed by his father, he was preparing himself in the Hall of Abstinence for the next day's solemn rites.

He hurried back and arrived just in time to receive his appointment to the "jewelled Inheritance" from the lips of the dying Emperor. As the sun rose above the horizon flooding the cold clear sky with gold, earth lost the greatest of her rulers and her men.

The burden placed on his shoulders as a child had been borne through sixty-one years with such courage and capacity, such mastery of the essential, such selfless elimination of personal vanity, such appreciation of outside talent that even after he was laid to rest in his great gold lacquer coffin and carried out of the high-walled palace of the living to the far-viewed mausoleum of the dead, the example he had set continued to act as an inspiring and compelling standard, and the administrative system he had organized never ceased functioning with the efficiency he always demanded even more from himself than from others.

Of course it was no small help to the preservation of this valuable continuity, that he not only was very great himself, but that he lived in a great age, an age which having overcome the weariness of the latter Mings and the instability of the period of transition rose once more into sane and joyful activity.



K'ang Hsi's own pre-eminence was so unquestionable he never felt the need of artificially enhancing its lustre by surrounding himself with mediocrities. On the contrary, he freely attracted to his Court and drew into the public service the very best of two fine aristocracies, the Manchu aristocracy of birth and the Chinese aristocracy of learning. These proved most useful to his son when confronted with the arduous task of following in his giant footsteps.

Built on an immeasurably smaller scale, Yung Chêng, Harmonious Righteousness, as he styled his reign, nevertheless had the judgment to abstain from originality and to continue along the great lines traced by genius and was quite sincere when, in his amplification of the Sacred Edict, which he published in 1725, he said he conformed his mind wholly to that of his revered father.

In spite of his anti-missionary attitude the Court Jesuits were not unfavourably impressed by him.

"The new Emperor," they wrote, "is witty and speaks well, only rather too fast, not giving time for an answer. Some think he affects this to avoid hearing persuasion to change his resolution. He applies himself diligently to the affairs of his Empire and is always labouring for his people. The surest way to win his favour is to bring forward some scheme of public utility or for the relief of the poor. He takes it up keenly and carries it out regardless of expense."

This devotion to the public good made it possible for all the important works initiated by his father to be completed under him, just as his careful even if somewhat pedantic management provided the means for his son's magnificence. As indefatigable a worker as either, his thirteen years of power meant no relaxation of the watchful discipline indispensable in all highly centralized government systems for checking the insidious canker of slackness and corruption, and though he lacked their bigness of soul and urbanity of manner to smooth down the sharp edges of severity and make it easier to enforce, he did carry the greatness of his predecessor's reign safely and undiminished into that of his successor.

In one respect, his patronage of the Imperial porcelain factory at Ching Tê Chên, his record fully equals theirs, for he had the good fortune to appoint T'ang Ying to the Directorate in 1728 and the good sense to allow that remarkable man's artistic and organizing genius the fullest scope, with the result that contented workmen turned out satisfactory work, making the Yung Chêng mark one of supreme excellence in ceramics. Indeed, such a faultless balance between perfection of technique and beauty of form, between bold experiment and

the deep anchored strength of unadulterated tradition had been attained, but never so continuously maintained before.

The golden rule followed was in T'ang Ying's own words that "the outlines were taken from the patterns of ancient brocade, the colours from a garden seen from an arbour in spring time."

But in graver matters than the moulding and decorating of dragon bowls and porcelain lanterns, the new Emperor soon discovered that the great inheritance, however jewelled, had many flaws and saddled him with some terribly harassing problems. For instance, the management of the Imperial princes. That problem had baffled K'ang Hsi's ripe wisdom. How could Yung Chêng's oral and written loquacity be expected to cope with it? Furious at their father's choice the undutiful sons, more intractable than ever, at once started a widely ramified plot against it, enlisting on their side "lamas, bonzes, leeches, soothsayers, astrologers, even actors, barbers and Europeans." Some being popular, others in command of large frontier forces, their ill-will constituted a grave menace to public peace.

Yung Chêng, who was not a fighter, fretted and fumed, admonished, reprimanded, scolded, finally fell to abusing his wicked brothers as "disreputable creatures" and "black-hearted monsters"—even giving these endearing epithets official sanction. The end was that as many as three were arrested, tried and degraded. Two of these died soon after in prison of suspiciously timely diseases.

A fourth, deprived of his liberty, subsequently found prison air equally deadly.

There seems, however, to be no doubt that the odious rôle of fratricide was forced upon Yung Chêng.

To his loyal brothers he proved unfailingly kind and affectionate and was constitutionally so averse from bloodshed he would even refrain from treading on an insect or on anyone's shadow lest he should cause them harm.

His repression of Christian propaganda has been described as a result of these domestic broils, because several of the seditious princes were in friendly intercourse with Catholic priests and were suspected of carrying on some of their treasonable correspondence in Portuguese.

However, the real cause of the abrupt stop put to missionary activity in 1724 lies elsewhere, and must be sought on the one hand in the narrow dogmatism of Rome, on the other in the thirst for political expansion manifested by all European Christians alike.



From the very first the number and the excellence of the guns on board their vessels abundantly demonstrated that they wanted to acquire physical control over the bodies of the Chinese at least as ardently as they hoped to gather their souls into the fold of the Christian Church. What K'ang Hsi had liked so much in the Jesuits was that these, being highly educated men, represented the new European spirit of broad-minded rationalism and scientific research far more than bigoted adherence to any exclusive religious confession.

Jesuit mentality differed fundamentally from that of the Dominicans and Franciscans, who worked chiefly under Spanish and Portuguese protection and recognized no salvation outside the narrowest, most sectarian view of the faith. When their eyes wearied of turning upwards to the well-haloed Paradise of their passionate saints, they glared with devouring envy at the favour enjoyed by the Jesuits in Peking, and on the thriving state of Jesuit missions. This prosperity was due to the fact that the Jesuits, realizing how vitally the reverence shown to ancestors and to the spirit of the sages was bound up with the moral stability of the Chinese, allowed their converts to continue observing their ancient rites, whereas the other orders damned these as so much pagan idolatry. In course of time the difference of view-point fermented into a quarrel big enough to be referred to Rome. There both parties at once set to vigorous pulling of all the wires and silken threads they could command so as to obtain a verdict in their favour. For years the decision swayed backwards and forwards, one Pontiff pronouncing for the narrow, his successor for the broader view. The immense distance and the difficulty of continuous intercourse had in practice considerably relaxed the bonds of hierarchical discipline and allowed Far Eastern missionaries much greater power of private judgment and action than the Vatican theoretically admitted. To curb this independence and bring Roman authority home to the remotest outposts of Catholicism, an ill-advised Pope (Clement XI) sent out an ill-informed Legate, Tournon, with orders to establish a regular episcopate in China and squash the Jesuit tolerance of ancestral rites. K'ang Hsi received this Legate with his usual urbanity, but, when he discovered the full import of his mission, ordered him to depart, and from that moment, though personally still friendly to the Jesuits in his service, no longer restrained the hands of provincial viceroys when they took measures to arrest the spread of a religion which preached obedience to a foreign Potentate instead of loyalty to national institutions.

Fifteen years later, in 1720, a more diplomatic Legate,

Mezzabarba, appeared on the scene. He was also amicably received by K'ang Hsi and before returning to Europe sanctioned, though under certain restrictions, the rites his predecessor had condemned absolutely. However, in 1742, Benedict XIV put the foot of papal authority down finally and irrevocably on such lapses from the straight and narrow path leading if not to spiritual improvement, at least to beatitude in the charmed circle of Roman orthodoxy. Henceforth ritual remembrance of the world's greatest moral teacher was anathema and ancestor-worship damnation. With such an ebullition of bigotry did the Head of Christendom answer the steps which the rulers of China had meanwhile taken to safeguard their most sacred heritage.

In the very first year of Yung Chêng the viceroy of Chekiang and Fukien, having banished missionaries out of his own province to Macao, and transformed Christian churches into schools, memorialized the Throne begging for an extension of these measures on the anything but fanciful ground that the foreign preachers "sowed doubt and division among the people making it question the value of its own customs . . ." "condemning Chinese sages and ancestors as demons . . ." and countenancing "manners which offended the accepted standards of behaviour."

The suggestion was acted upon and an edict promulgated ordering all Chinese converts under strictest enforcement of the existing laws against pernicious sects to abandon this alien cult, depriving missionaries of the preaching licences allowed them by K'ang Hsi, and deporting them all to Macao. An exception was made only in favour of those whose scientific knowledge could be of use, and even they were not permitted to reside outside Peking where the Board of Rites could keep them under immediate supervision. To the Court Jesuits, aghast at this display of energy, Yung Chêng said :

"If I were to send Lamas to your country to proselytize for their religion, what would you say? How would you receive them? Ricci came to China under Wan Li, and rightly or wrongly was allowed to settle here. There were then so few of you it did not much matter either way. But under the reign of my Father your numbers have grown considerably; you have built your churches everywhere; you want all the Chinese to turn Christian. But then what becomes of us? The slaves of your rulers? In case of trouble your converts only look to you. At present you are not dangerous, but when your ships arrive in their hundreds and their thousands, things will be very different. Already China is troubled with the Russians in the North, the Europeans in the South, the Oelôts in the West. You I will allow to remain in Peking as long as you give no grounds of complaint. But I will not



have you in the provinces. Neither can I suffer you to attack the traditions of our sages. I bear you no personal ill-will ; I only desire the good of my people."

Wherewith, without waiting for their answer, he dismissed them from his presence. Nor was there anything relevant they could have answered.

However, extreme courtesy being the rule of his Court, the very next year he sent the Pope a present of 116 rolls of silk and some roots of ginseng in acknowledgment of a message transmitted to him by two Carmelites. This seems to have encouraged Vatican circles to hope that a well-equipped embassy might procure some relaxation of the anti-missionary edict.

In 1727 the King of Portugal, anxious to do something to retrieve the rapidly waning influence of his lay subjects as well, dispatched such an embassy to China. It brought costly presents. These were graciously accepted, better ones sent in return, and the ambassador and his staff hospitably housed and lavishly banqueted. But of the ordinances against dogmatic propaganda not one tittle was either altered or revoked.

The policy of prohibition was strictly maintained and any change introduced in the next reign was only in the direction of greater stringency in the enforcement of the law. Not in a spirit of religious intolerance, alien to the best tradition of the Sages, but because the threat of foreign encroachment really needed the most careful watching. As Yung Chêng told the Jesuits, China had to protect herself in the North against Russians, in the South against several European nations, in the West against Mongols, Mahommedans and Tibetans. Truly the jewelled inheritance was beset with many cares.

The Russian problem presented the fewest difficulties, thanks to equal readiness on both sides to negotiate and to the solid bulwark which the size and desolate wildness of the frontier regions opposed to excessive closeness of intercourse.

Whatever friction had arisen there was amicably settled by a new treaty concluded at Kiachta in 1727 between Manchu and Russian plenipotentiaries. The boundary line was re-delimited with greater accuracy, mutual trade facilities guaranteed in specified marts, the extradition of fugitive criminals arranged for. The Russians were also allowed to send a trade mission of 200 persons to Peking once every three years, to keep five language students there and have their own church served by three popes. In the Chinese text of the treaty these were called Lamas, no doubt to prevent their falling under the restrictions applicable to Christian priests. Nor did the

name suit them badly, for they possessed the self-centred repose of the Lamas in a far greater measure than the restless enterprise of their Roman colleagues. The Russians were granted so many privileges because Yung Chêng was anxious to be on sufficiently good terms with them to prevent their joining hands with the Oelöts, still troublesome, treacherous neighbours.

Ts'êwang Araptan indeed was murdered in 1727, but the rivalries and resentments fermenting between his people and the Manchus were too deep-seated to be greatly affected by the death of one leader.

His son and successor, Korton Tseh Ling, almost inevitably continued the traditional policy of enmity over which the most elaborate peace treaties could not cast more than a very thin veil. Therefore, in spite of Yung Chêng's constitutional aversion to costly military expeditions, the western frontiers throughout his reign remained in a state of tension, which would not yield to the soothing syrup of diplomacy, but necessitated the sharp surgery of war.

It is by no means impossible that the West Mongolian rebellion round Koko Nor, the Tibetan rising in Lhasa, the Miao Tze tribes' revolt in Szechuan, Kueichou and Yünnan, the Oelöt raids into Mongolia and Kansu were organically connected and represent a determined effort of the Lama Church to shake itself free from its subordination to the State, which K'ang Hsi had imposed on it. His death seemed a favourable opportunity for attacking his Empire, arraying against it all available racial hatreds and aspirations. The proximity of the dates and localities of the successive outbreaks certainly suggests some central and pertinacious though of course carefully hidden leadership. And the Lama Church, just then in a stage where a marked shrinkage of spiritual fervour is followed by a corresponding increase in the zest for worldly power, had both the opportunity and the inclination to become the focus of a widespread conspiracy against Sino-Manchu dominion.

The first trouble round Koko Nor, though ostensibly begun by the chieftain Blobdzang Tantsing, shows Lama inspiration very clearly. A great meeting was held on the shores of the lake and the cry of "Down with Manchu Dominion" well started. As is the way with such cries, its appeal rested on noisy pugnaciousness more than on moral justification. These tribes had been allowed to retain such a liberal measure of home-rule and the tribute they brought to Peking was so amply repaid by the entertainments and presents they received there, they really lacked all serious grievances.



Aware of this, their wiser leaders would not join in the cry. But amidst the prevalent war-frenzy wisdom was highly unpopular. They had to flee for their lives and appeared at the Court of Yung Chêng, seeking for assistance. With Chinese interests and dynastic prestige equally at stake he could not possibly refuse. Besides, the fighting units, swarming out of the felt tents at the rebel chieftain's call, had already been joined by hardly less numerous bands of fighting monks sallying forth out of the lamasseries armed both with carnal and spiritual weapons. Altogether 200,000 men collected, keen to harass the border with slaying, burning and pillaging raids.

The dangerous character of the revolt was apparent, strong and speedy action imperative.

Five strong army columns were set in motion under the command of Nien Kêng Yao and Yoh Chung-ch'i, both experienced generals, who had won distinction in the last Tibetan war. Knowing the ground and undaunted by its difficulties they soon had the rebels on the run.

Early in 1724 Yoh Chung-ch'i fell on their camp with such weight and suddenness Blobdzang Tantsing, surprised in bed, hastily flung on women's clothes and thus disguised managed to escape to Dzungaria. Less fortunate, his men were either slain or made prisoners. A further defeat took the last kick out of his supporters. The two victorious generals were created dukes, the powers of the Chinese governor of Hsi Ning over the neighbouring frontier chieftains considerably enlarged, the lamas forbidden to carry arms, monasteries not allowed to contain more than 300 of these excessively muscular saints.

But the anti-Manchu movement squashed in the Koko Nor district leapt into new life among the Miao Tze tribes of Szechuan, Kueichou and Yünnan. The apparent cause was supplied by the viceroy O-êrh-t'ai's attempt to check all centrifugal tendencies by applying the brake of regular Chinese civil administration to the natives' untamed primitiveness. O-êrh-t'ai was an Imperial clansman of high repute and could count on the fullest backing by the Court. Nevertheless, it took him three years (1726-29) of fighting and marching to carry out his programme. And in the end it was doubtful whether it had been worth while, for in 1735, their conqueror having meanwhile been made Grand Secretary in Peking, the aborigines, still incapable of adjusting themselves to the mysteries of civilized officialdom, were out on the war-path again, raiding and slaughtering extensive districts in Kueichou. While their first revolt was in full swing, the devils' cauldron of Lhasa itself boiled over. With the blessings of the Dalai Lama called

"Ocean of Wisdom and Bliss" the governor was attacked and murdered in his residence in August, 1727, and for a few weeks priestly independence triumphantly asserted itself throughout the town. But the Lamas, though venerated by the distant Mongols, were too well known in Tibet for the attempt at the re-establishment of their uncontrolled sovereignty to evoke much enthusiasm. The hoped-for general rising in their favour did not take place. The Dalai Lama's momentary triumph fell flat, swiftly, completely, like a leaky balloon.

Recovering from its initial surprise the Pro-Manchu party soon won back all its former positions. Even more, for the Emperor mobilized strong forces to prevent the Oelöt Khan from sending any help to his ecclesiastical allies, and to cut off communication between them the Dalai Lama was relegated to the lower, greyer latitudes of Szechuan. In a well-guarded monastery there, he was given ample leisure to meditate on the unseemliness of worldly desires.

During his enforced absence, his pontifical rôle was played at the Potala by an understudy, selected for the purpose, and what was left of his temporal power divided between the two Imperial residents and Pro-Manchu native ministers under a Tibetan king. The district of Patang and Litang were detached from Tibet and annexed to the Empire. Large barracks were built near Lhasa for the Chinese garrison, whose duty it was to insure the permanence of the new settlement and to convince the Lamas of the extreme advisability of henceforth sticking to their beads.

But all Lamas did not dwell in Lhasa. Their Church was a mighty organization with affiliations and adherents spread throughout northern and central Asiatic regions which could not all be policed by garrisons. In those wide steppes and inaccessible valleys Manchu-Chinese power appeared so remote and weak it could well be challenged.

Consequently Lama intriguers barely venturing to whisper in Tibet, spoke out quite loud on the other side of the Kuen Lun Mountains, and simply shouted still further North on the banks of the Ili under the shelter of Tseling Khan's tents. Blobdzang Tantsing, the refugee, added the passionate eloquence of his grievances to theirs. So of course did the Khan of the Oelöts. Between them, they worked up a clamour, which made the anti-Manchu agitation just subdued in Lhasa break out with increased virulence along the whole of the Western Mongolian border, enkindling the third great conflict for the hegemony of Central Asia between the descendants of Jenghis Khan and those of Nurhachu.



Opening with a Manchu defeat west of Kobdo it raged for five years (1729-34) with the usual ups and downs of prolonged warfare. Famous generals like Yoh Chung-ch'i saw the lustre of their reputation dimmed in these wearing campaigns beset with such a mass of incalculable difficulties. Unknown leaders like Tsereuf rose to sudden fame. Tsereuf was brother-in-law to the Emperor and a Mongol chieftain. Indeed, from the beginning the real decision lay with the Mongols. The strength of the Manchu army depended largely on their valour, the justification of Manchu political claims, wholly on their loyalty. Once more K'ang Hsi's able handling of Mongol susceptibilities, faithfully copied by Yung Chêng, proved superior to Oelöt violence.

Whole-heartedly the Khalka Mongolians cast their weight unto the side of the Manchus, all the more vigorously because their lamasseries found the generous patronage of the Court of Peking more to their taste than exhausting struggles for the chimera of self-determination. Like his great-uncle and father before him, Tseling Khan, in spite of several victories, was ultimately defeated by the pull which the grandeur, the lavish hospitality and the culture of the Court of the Ch'ings exercised over the Eastern and Central Mongolians.

His barbarous camps and imperfectly civilized capital had nothing comparable to offer.

Neither were any of his military triumphs ever of more than local importance. Consequently by 1734 he resolved to sue for peace and, since Yung Chêng too was thoroughly tired of a war which had necessitated an outlay of 70 million taels, negotiations were commenced, conducted and completed with exemplary speed and unusual reasonableness. The boundary which Tseling Khan promised to respect was drawn with much common sense along the sharp peaks and dangerous passes of the Altai Mountains, a clear natural barrier, not defying geographical facts as boundaries drawn at peace congresses so often do.

The reward was sixteen years' tranquillity and would have been more if Tseling Khan had not died about 1746.

Yung Chêng had ceased reigning long before. Not endowed with the exuberant vitality that characterized both his father and his son and so many Manchu princes, the stupendous work of actively governing his great empire wore him out in the short space of thirteen years. Possibly the fact that he was forty-five when he came to the throne and had difficulty in suddenly changing his well-set habits of cautious obedience into those of fearless command made the task more exhausting.

In any abnormally complex situation, as, for instance the one produced by the Oelöt war, he did not feel equal to the strain and called in the assistance of specially selected Grand-Secretaries and presidents of the principal Government Departments to meet him every morning in secret consultation. Their number did not exceed six and they formed a kind of higher staff (Chün Chi Ch'u) on whom he could depend for information, advice and discretion. Though called into being to meet a special emergency, this committee was never abolished but gradually developed into a permanent Council which, thanks to its daily personal contact with the Sovereign and its more manageable size, came to overshadow the older, larger State Council composed of all the heads of Government Boards and of distinguished scholars and public men.

Having begun the day in serious discussion of the most burning problems of the hour, the ordinary routine flooded the rest of the Emperor's time with audiences, reviews, ritual functions, the signing of rescripts, the reading of memorials, the studying of reports and commenting on their contents and their writers. Yung Chêng, proud of his scholarship and his penmanship, took infinite pains to make his comments interesting to read and beautiful to look at. In the published form given them by Ch'ien Lung, they fill sixty large volumes. No wonder he broke down under the double weight of momentous responsibility and constant preoccupation with the minutiae of clerical detail.

In October, 1735, he was taken ill while giving a morning audience, his last one. In the evening he died, only fifty-seven years old.

His grave was ready for him, for he was too careful a man to neglect so important a matter as the building of an Imperial sepulchre. Already, in 1729, he had given orders for work to be started on it, but "in an economical and plain manner, omitting such things as statues which require an excessive amount of stone-cutting and exhaust the people's strength." Strangely enough, the geomancers he consulted about an appropriate site, prevented his choosing one near his father's mausoleum, declaring that neither the quality nor the configuration of the available ground appeared auspicious. But to the West of Peking they had discovered "a sublime spot girdled by a hundred streams," "screened by bold and lofty peaks"—radiating "unalloyed felicity for 10,000 years." And there in a place, which is so beautiful it really does seem "to have been shaped by Heaven itself," the hard-worked man found rest from councils, edicts and memorials in the cool dark crypt



of the Mausoleum of Exalted Beneficence (Tai Ling). His successor endowed it with chiselled porticoes and long spirit avenues guarded by huge stone images representing the wisdom of ministers, the valour of generals, the faithfulness and instinctive knowledge of animals. To the blue hills towering beyond, he gave the name of "Mounts of Everlasting Peace," Yung Ning Shan.

He was the deceased Emperor's fourth son and took Ch'ien Lung for his reign title.

The method of his selection was novel. Yung Chêng had devised it shortly after his accession to prevent a recurrence of the deplorable fratricidal jealousies which had so grievously troubled the end of his father's reign and the beginning of his. He wrote out the name of the son he had chosen as his heir and placed it in an envelope, then in a sealed casket, which in the presence of princes and ministers was deposited "at the back of the Imperial Tablet grandly upright and gloriously radiant" in the Main Throne Room. A similar document, its seal impression forming a whole with the one on the first paper, was filed in the archives of the Imperial Household. A third one was "put in a pouch which he always wore." This procedure made the succession a settled, definitely adjudged matter, removing it once for all from the sphere of factious intrigues and uncertainties. It remained in use for several generations. Yung Chêng's selection was to prove singularly fortunate.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### CH'IENT LUNG

**I**N Ch'ien Lung, "glorious Sovereignty," that prophetically chosen name, the line of greatness, begun by Nurhachu, the intrepid fighter, the stalwart builder, the fateful seer of future might, brought quite near by his able sons Huang Tai ki and Dorgun, finally established and brilliantly developed by K'ang Hsi, carefully nursed by Yung Chêng, reached its point of culmination. All they had begun, he completed, all they promised, he fulfilled. A worthy grandson of K'ang Hsi, built on the same generous lines, he also gave the Chinese people sixty years of sound government, his energy, his intelligence, his lofty spirit radiating their stimulating influence throughout the vast hierarchy of civil and military officers on whose good will and capacity the carrying out of government measures ultimately rested.

He was twenty-four when he ascended the Dragon Throne, with some experienced councillors like O-êrh-t'ai, the Manchu, and Chang Ting yü, the learned Chinese, to advise him on state matters, and his mother, the Lady Niu hulu, to help him maintain harmony in the Imperial clan and order in the inner Palace. Created Empress-Dowager, she carried out the important functions of that redoubtable position for over forty years, till in 1777 even her vitality gave out and her long career came to an end just as she reached eighty-eight, the age Ch'ien Lung was to reach also. With her quick wit, her masterful character and untiring energy she must from his earliest infancy have exercised a far deeper influence on her son than the father, from whom he inherited nothing but his scholarship and his tenacious love of work, the latter a somewhat colourless virtue yet of paramount importance in the head of a centralized administration. For work often of a most difficult kind was hourly borne in upon him by the never-ceasing flow of events.

The very first month of his reign he was confronted by the problem of the Miao Tze rising against which Yung Chêng's generals seemed to be unable to make any headway. Ch'ien



Lung at once showed that determination to keep the Manchu banners flying high on an ever-widening road of triumph and that stern intolerance of any failure to keep it there, which made him push the frontiers of the Middle Kingdom further than they had ever reached before. He had no use for officers whom half-naked savages could laugh at for years from behind some rough stone forts. He cashiered them and entrusted Chang Kuang ssu, a pupil of O-êrh-t'ai's, with the task of quieting the warring natives. The new general acquitted himself successfully of this task. Within four months he had got the natives so quiet that 18,000 of them never moved their tongues again. Besides, 1,200 of their forts were tumbled into useless heaps of stone and 2,000 of their villages smashed into ruins uninhabitable to all but brooding spirits of vindictiveness and hate. Four years later the same commander by the same methods put down similar troubles among the natives of Hunan and Kuangsi.

Consequently his reputation stood so high that, when in 1746 the Miao Tze of the small and the big Gold River in Western Szechuan rebelled, he was sent to pacify them and no doubt expected to do so in his usual swift and drastic style. But this time luck forsook him. The problem was far more intricate. He had to deal not with a purely local rising but with the first movement of a revival of the big anti-Manchu cacophony with hosts of western tribes as the chief executants and the Tibetan lamas as the secret conductors. And this first movement was not a gentle *andante*, it was an *allegro furioso*. Caught in a network of defiles, shot at from dozens of impregnable forts, harassed by overwhelming transport and commissariat difficulties he had to fight the mountainous, malarious country as well as the warlike inhabitants. Worst of all, that widespread plot he was pitted against had successfully smuggled spies into his innermost councils, who betrayed all his plans to the enemy and made his best laid stratagems miscarry.

Failure followed upon failure.

From Peking Imperial anger growled ominously and dispatched the Manchu general Nachin to investigate matters on the spot. Not unnaturally the new-comer and Chang Kuang ssu quarrelled acrimoniously and the spies still being at work, the situation, far from mending, grew steadily worse. So did Ch'ien Lung's temper.

He settled the two commanders' wrangles by having Chang Kuang ssu's head cut off and Nachin's career cut short with a sword, not of honour, he sent him. Harsh but necessary measures. Officers who cannot sink their personal disagree-

ments in that unquestioning obedience which is the very soul of an army must be removed before their disintegrating example has had time to spread. So must those to whom life means more than the glory of the flag. Knowing this, Ch'ien Lung never hesitated to mete out the sternest punishment to any general falling below the standard of efficiency and valour which he was determined to maintain.

Thus in the Burmese war he ordered one commander convicted of cowardice to be sliced ; another only guilty of incompetence to commit suicide. In the War against Eastern Turkestan several generals were beheaded for lack of success. This mercilessness has been stigmatized as cruelty and ingratitude. The latter charge is clearly contradicted by the substantial gifts, the signal marks of honour, the unfaltering confidence with which he rewarded his successful generals. Nor is the charge of cruelty founded any better. Quick-tempered, he was quick in striking, but took no pleasure in inflicting those sharp punishments unquestionably needed in the empire he had to administer—an empire so vast and racially so heterogeneous the forces of insubordination and separatism were always strong and ready to pull the central power to pieces the moment it ceased to make itself feared as well as loved.

The number of brilliant officers who enabled him to carry out his grandfather's ideal of a China bigger than that of the T'angs is the best proof that he took the correct measure of the men he had to deal with and handled them the right way.

When in 1779, grown old on the throne, he reviewed the military achievements of his reign, he commemorated the exploits of his best generals in eloquent verses, calling them the five officials of outstanding merit. One of them, Fu Hêng, Grand Councillor, Grand Secretary and his brother-in-law, was selected by him to retrieve Manchu prestige in the Gold River Valleys of Szechuan.

Another, Yoh Chung ch'i, was torn away from his writing of poems for his Garden of white ginger blossoms and also sent to the front, though he had retired and was over sixty, somewhat old for such arduous campaigning. But Ch'ien Lung knew that his experienced eye would be invaluable. The spies were detected and slain. Deprived of their assistance the Miao Tze chieftain Solopan soon found himself unable to withstand the weight of superior arms and numbers which the Manchus could now bring to bear upon him effectively. He offered to surrender and repent,—permanently he said, for the time being he thought.

As serious trouble had just then broken out in Lhasa and



the situation in Dzungaria was also extremely tense, Ch'ien Lung needed his troops elsewhere. So he decided to accept Solopan's protestations at their face value. The *allegro furioso* changed into melodious *cantabile* in Szechuan.

In Lhasa, on the contrary, the war drums were beating, the mob was yelling, the priests were cursing, murder and riot roaring through the streets, the head of the Tibetan King dripping gore and horror from the sharp point of a lance. He had been assassinated by the two Manchu residents because they had struck the trail of his secret plottings with the Oelöts for shaking off the supervision of Peking. His death precipitated the breaking out of the revolt he had planned. His slayers were slain in their turn, as were all the Chinese on whom the Tibetans could lay hands.

Ch'ien Lung at once dispatched a strong punitive expedition. However, anxious not to be saddled with a long Tibetan war just when he was contemplating a decisive blow against the Oelöts, he simultaneously employed all the resources of a judiciously gilded diplomacy. With excellent results. Laymen returned to their shops and their pastures, lamas to their masses and prayer-wheels which they learned to turn with commendable zeal under the watchful eyes of two new Imperial residents and a distinctly increased garrison.

The office of King, which the last holder had used against the Manchus, was abolished and the temporal power given back to the Dalai Lama, still the "Ocean of Wisdom and Bliss." For on the death of his substitute in 1734, he had been allowed to return from exile. Anxious not to be sent back to it, his olfactory organs for scenting the winner sharpened by many tribulations, he seems to have kept clear of the last conspiracy, hiding all anti-Manchu feelings within the speechless depths of his innermost heart. Subsequent events proved the wisdom of his caution, for he lived to see the downfall of the Oelöts.

It occurred seven years later, in 1757, brought about quite as much by their own mistakes as by the might of Manchu aggression. Ever since the death of Tseling Khan, Dzungaria lacked a capable leader.

Tseling's son and successor, Tsebek, possessed all the vices and insolence of youth without any of its charm. Worse still, he had a stepbrother, Torgui, who though a lama and a bastard, thirsted for worldly power. He contrived to get the unfortunate young Khan seized, blinded and cast forth into outermost darkness, while he himself, absolved from his vows by the Dalai Lama and honoured with the title of the Intrepid Swan Lord, seized the reins of power. But the great chieftains in

whom the pride of birth was strong, refused to acknowledge a man with such a doubtful pedigree. Under the leadership of two cousins, Davatsi and Amursana, who claimed descent from Araptan Khan on the mother's side, they rose against the "Intrepid Swan Lord" and though defeated at first, slew him in the end and set up Davatsi in his stead. This happened about 1753.

Peace might now have been re-established and the Oelöts regained their strength if Amursana had not turned traitor and attempted to oust his newly installed cousin. He failed and fled to the Manchu Court for protection and assistance.

Ch'ien Lung eagerly seized this opportunity for deposing Davatsi, whose arrogance had offended him, and for establishing Manchu law and order along those important western routes so long infested by Oelöt lawlessness and turmoil. Acknowledging Amursana as the rightful Khan of course under Ch'ing suzerainty, he sent him forth with two army corps of 25,000 infantry, 74,000 cavalry each, under Pan ti, Yung Ch'ang and Saral.

In the spring of 1755 this large well-equipped force started on its westward march, and though the hardships of the trek through the Gobi desert, aggravated by violent storms, reduced men and horses to skin and bones, the Oelöts did not venture to attack them, or perhaps rather did not wish to attack them. As Ch'ien Lung afterwards wrote on a tablet commemorating his victory "hardly an arrow was discharged."

Davatsi, steeped in brandy every day, hated by the traders for his ruthless exactions, by the tribes at large for his perpetual levies, had lost what little popularity he ever possessed and was quite incapable of organizing any effective resistance. Impoverished by years of misgovernment and strife, the majority of chieftains deemed it wiser to side with Amursana who enjoyed the patronage of the wealthy Ch'ien Lung, lavish with gifts of silk and tea and promises of the most benevolent treatment to those submitting in time. So all along the route through Dzungaria they came to the camps of his generals and with folded hands and humble kotows offered submission and active help. Even the Lamas fell into line. The rumour spread that Davatsi had only 100 men left. That proved premature. But he clearly was cornered, his back against Mount Gedeng, his front protected by a marshy lake.

Amursana, who was the most keenly interested in his destruction, arranged a surprise attack on this position. However, in the confusion of cracking rifles and yelling men, Davatsi escaped and fled into Turkish territory, to the Buriats. As he



might have expected, these, with Ch'ien Lung's armies astride the Ili, found it inexpedient to stand up for the sacred right of asylum. They captured, disarmed and handed him over to Pan ti. Had it been to Amursana his days would have been numbered. But Ch'ien Lung needed him to remind all whom it might concern, who now held the power of making or un-making Khans. Therefore on his arrival in Peking he was honoured with a title, assigned a palace to live in and no doubt allowed enough brandy to drown any home-sickness that might assail him.

This lenient treatment of his rival incensed Amursana. Neither did he relish the division of Dzungaria into four districts controlled by Ch'ien Lung's nominees, nor the presence of Imperial garrisons at several important centres. Soon he began to ask himself was it worth while being Khan under such conditions. Then as his hold over his countrymen increased and he compared their numbers to those of the Manchus scattered among them, the further question presented itself to his mind, was it really necessary?

He came to the conclusion it was not.

On the contrary, the very fact that the Emperor had left a large army thousands of miles away from its base unsuspectingly encamped among tribes whose friendliness was assumed, whose enmity was very real, offered him an opportunity neither Galdan nor his nephew ever enjoyed of striking a terrific blow at the traditional enemy. He knew there was a peace party in Peking who would demur at the cost of a retaliatory expedition. Also he would not be fighting alone, for the Mahommedans of the Tarim Basin viewed the western extension of Chinese sovereignty with jealous eyes and were quite willing to attack it from behind the shelter of Oelöt cuirasses. It was true that Amursana owed his elevation wholly to Ch'ien Lung's assistance, and that the chieftains had accepted his presents and sworn submission and fealty. But though they had not yet drunk all the tea, nor worn out all the silks he gave them, what did such a trifle as gratitude weigh against the mighty fact that their blood still throbbed with the pulse of Jenghis Khan. How could it stand still and stagnate under Manchu suzerainty however legitimately imposed?

Therefore once again it foamed up in rebellion. Pan ti, caught in Ili with only 500 men, and several other Imperial garrisons perished in the sudden rising. Taking up the plans of Galdan, Amursana also tried to arouse the call of the blood among the Eastern Mongolian Khalkas, and in spite of the long and bitter feud between them and his Oelöts, nearly succeeded.

For Ch'ien Lung had given offence. In his anger at the renewal of the great Dzungarian war, he had ordered a Khalka banner prince to be executed for incompetence in the field. In revenge his people threatened to join the anti-Manchu movement. Since the route from Peking to Ili lay through their territory and they supplied the horses and men needed for the Government courier service, the situation looked extremely black. Fortunately, for the one Khalka prince who had been killed, there were dozens who for years had lived on the bounty of the Manchu Court, above all there were the Lama prelates who had developed too keen a taste for the fleshpots of Peking willingly to face the risk of losing them. It was the Abbot of the great Monastery at Urga who exerted all the fervour of his eloquence in favour of loyalty to a dynasty to whom the Khalkas owed so much. His arguments, luminous in a halo of ecclesiastical authority, carried the day. The route to Ili was open again, the postal service functioning with all its former rapidity, and East Mongolian man-power fighting valiantly on the side of its purveyors of tea, silk and silver. And when Chao Hui, a Manchu and one of the five gratefully remembered in Ch'ien Lung's poem of 1779, was created Commander-in-chief, Amursana's star swiftly faded to its setting.

Defeated in three battles he fled to Russian territory and died shortly afterwards (1757) in Tobolsk of small-pox. So did four-tenths of his subjects. The remainder, trying their favourite game of apparent submission and subsequent revolt once too often, were made to feel the full force of Imperial wrath. Decimated, the cowed survivors and their desolate pasture-grounds were definitely annexed and placed under Chinese administration adapted to local conditions. Chao Hui was also charged with putting an end to the double game which the Mahomedans of the Tarim Basin had been playing. Egged on by two brothers of the ruling family of Khoja, evidently banking on a prolongation of Oelöt resistance which failed to materialize, they had murdered the envoy sent to negotiate the terms of their acceptance of Manchu suzerainty. They fought stubbornly, but Chao Hui's dash, supported by strong reinforcements, poured in under the command of Fu Te, O-kuei and Ming Jui, wore down resistance. One by one all their big towns, Khotan, Kashgar, Yarkand, were taken, the two Khoja brothers turned into friendless fugitives beyond the border, whose heads an officious Turkish Khan soon forwarded to Peking, a gruesome but acceptable present.

By 1760 peace was re-established and from that date, thanks to Manchu valour, the Chinese dragon, as in the great



days of the T'angs, again controlled both the northern and the southern roads to the West. Chinese settlements and forts arose near the ancient cities, trade moved freely between them, and an effective bolt had been pushed across the spread of Russian conquests in those regions. These were conquests by brute force only, unredeemed by any gifts of a humaner culture, of greater wealth, of more security and justice.

The famous trek of the Kalmuck or Turguts (1770-71) from the banks of the Volga to those of the Ili shows how much the nomads hated the rule of Czar or Czarina, how irresistibly they were attracted to that of the Son of Heaven. These Turguts were a West Mongolian tribe whom Araptan's enmity had driven from their home-lands to seek Russian protection. Allowed to settle along the Caspian Sea, they soon discovered they had to do much fighting for their so-called protectors, besides being heavily taxed and treated by coarse, corrupt officials like captive bears on an iron chain. In a dozen galling ways their political independence was steadily cut down, their religious freedom seriously threatened. The discontent bred by these very tangible grievances finally crystallized in haunting visions of Lhasa the City of Gods resplendent in snow and sanctity beyond the eastern rim of the sky and in acute home-sickness for the old pasture-grounds emptied now of their Oelöt enemies. The dispossessed remembered, too, that K'ang Hsi had already urged them to return. Secretly Ch'ien Lung may have done the same. Secretly, too, the Dalai Lama's blessing was asked for and obtained.

In January, 1771, the whole tribe, over 70,000 families, and all their herds, camels, horses, cattle, sheep in their hundreds and their thousands swung into motion. The frozen Ural was safely crossed, but then their rear harassed by pursuing Russians, their front by aggressive Khirgis and Cossacks, beset on all sides by hardships and danger, their progress became one long trail of agony. All the animals except the strongest camels and 30 per cent. of the humans perished.

At last after seven months some 50,000 families, sadly reduced in weight and numbers, reached the safety of Chinese soil. They were received with the greatest hospitality, given immediate relief, as well as a year's provisions and assigned the farm and pasture lands left derelict by the decimation of the Oelöts. The Emperor himself entertained their chiefs at Jehol and the gorgeous Temple of the Teaching of Puto (P'u-t'o tsung shêng miao) modelled, but on a very much smaller scale, on the Potala of Lhasa, was inaugurated to commemorate three joyful events: the sixtieth birthday of the Emperor, the

eightieth of the Empress-Dowager, above all the return of the lost tribe of the Turguts to the Mongolian fold.

Already in 1755, expecting Amursana's submission to be permanent, Ch'ien Lung had erected a Temple of "All-pervading Peace" (Pu ning ssu) for the benefit of the Mongols visiting Jehol and, as the inscription tells, as a memorial to "the great reunion of the eight inner and forty-nine outer banners of the four clans of the Khalkas and of the newly joined Dzungars now all become one family again."

The family proved ungrateful.

In spite of Buddhist hymns and Temple Halls they broke the "all-pervading peace" and went back to their old game of quarrelling. For the last time though. To Ch'ien Lung belongs the merit of having brought the policy of combined sternness and magnanimity, traditional in his dynasty, its complete, its final triumph. With the return of the Turguts he united all Mongol tribes under his sovereignty and put an absolute end to the long-drawn-out conflict between the descendants of Jenghis Khan and those of Nurhachu. The vast stretch of the northern and western frontiers, whence the horror of barbarian invasions had so often and through the whole course of her history poured in upon China, was at last brought to rest in a deep, wellnigh permanent, a genuinely all-pervading peace.

No wonder he sought to preserve its memory in eloquent inscriptions engraved on stone and protected by that group of magnificent temples with which he made the Imperial hunting palace of Jehol a place of pilgrimage for the whole Lama world. No doubt their endowment and construction absorbed much treasure, but it was profitably invested, not vainly spent. For the glamour of those superb lamasseries kept the Mongols from their terrible raids, holding them spell-bound in devout obedience, awed into something bordering on adoration when, having ended their prayers and burnt their incense to the chanting of hundreds of purple-robed monks before the lotus throne of gigantic Bodhisattvas, they realized that this profusion of golden Divinities, of soaring pillars, of dragon ceilings, of turquoise-blue altar sets, of miraculous relic-shrines, of brocaded vestments, banners, carpets, prayer mats, of vibrant bells, of sonorous drums, of towering galleries, terraces, courtyards and porticoes beneath a splendour of yellow glazed tiles and roofs of sheer gold was the gift of the Son of Heaven to "comfort the afflicted, to cheer all those coming from afar, that they rejoice for ever and taste delight and happiness knowing no end."



This momentous work of pacification received its crowning glory when the Panchen Erdeni Lama of Tashilhumpo, who acted as regent for the infant Dalai Lama, came down from his Tibetan highlands in 1780 personally to offer his congratulations to Ch'ien Lung on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. The most sumptuous of all the Lamasseries in Jehol, the Mountain Temple of Bliss and Longevity (Hsü mi fu shou miao) was built in the holy ecclesiastic's honour and also, as the inscription written by the Emperor says, "looking Heavenwards to praise the glorious wisdom wherewith Our Ancestors ruled and protected the realm, looking earthwards to reward all those outer tribes who submitted to Us with a willing heart, who serve Us with loyal reverence."

One troublesome result of this otherwise eminently satisfactory solution of the century-old problem of China's relation to her less civilized neighbours, was the obligation it imposed on her of protecting her vassal states from foreign attacks. Thus Tibet, settling down comfortably under the benign sway of her home-grown ecclesiastics and her imported supervisors, had become so completely demilitarized, her thievish neighbours the Gurkhas, the recent conquerors of Nepal, could raid her with impunity.

There had been many bickerings among the market folk of both countries about the quality of the salt and the seriously depreciated Nepalese coins. In addition, the unworthy brothers of Panchen Erdeni Lama who visited Ch'ien Lung and unfortunately died of small-pox near Peking (November, 1790), squabbled over the division of the valuable gifts he had received. One brother, feeling aggrieved at the smallness of his share, withdrew to Nepal and incited the Gurkhas to invade Tibet.

Nothing loath, they clambered through the undefended passes, helped themselves liberally to all movable property and were on the road to the Holy City, when the Chinese residents contrived to buy them off by an immediate payment of large sums of money and the promise of a future annual subsidy of 15,000 ounces of silver.

This promise not being kept, the irate Gurkhas swooped down on Tashilhumpo, drove its new Panchen Lama and his monks into precipitate flight across the river and carried off immense quantities of loot, also a high Chinese official. The latter circumstance may have decided Ch'ien Lung to intervene at once and in an unmistakable manner. He sent an army of 70,000 men and his best general, Fu K'ang-an, a wise precaution, for the task of fighting a warlike enemy in face of the eternal snows of the highest mountains in the world, bristled

with difficulties. Fu K'ang-an overcame them all, and with a thoroughness and speed indicating the most efficient organization. In the spring of 1782 he entered Tibet, by September he had beaten the Gurkhas in one fierce battle on the Dingri Maiden Plain, hustled them over passes 15,000 feet high, pursued them closely though bridges were broken, glacier torrents foamed in the chasms below and he had to turn his cannon on his own army to get it to advance, and finally smashing their last desperate stand in another sanguinary battle, forced them to swallow the humble-pie of a dictated peace within a day's march to their capital Katmandu.

They agreed to disgorge their loot and their prisoners, never to trouble Tibet again and to pay the Emperor an annual tribute of horses and elephants. This they continued to do as long as the prestige of the Manchu dynasty endured.

It was now at its height and Ch'ien Lung could safely make his will felt even in those internal affairs of Tibet which hitherto had to be left untouched, however much they might need reform. Under cover of the theory of reincarnation, rank nepotism had controlled the choice of successors to deceased, exalted prelates. What was worse, those holy souls showed a deplorable tendency to reincarnate themselves in families distinctly unfriendly to China. To teach them better ways, Ch'ien Lung decreed in 1793 that henceforth they must submit to filtration through lots placed in an urn, a golden urn, and presented to the church by his own majestic hand in proper acknowledgment of their sanctity. The names of potential Dalai or Panchen lamas had to receive the approval of the Chinese advisers in Lhasa and of the authorities in Peking before they could be inscribed on wooden slips, sealed and dropped into the precious urn. Nor could they be drawn except in the presence of the Imperial residents. At the same time, the Chinese garrison was strengthened and the passes into Tibet, particularly the southern ones, carefully guarded. Thus under Ch'ien Lung's able leadership the State had triumphed over the Church of Tibet.

In the far South ancient claims to suzerainty and tribute were also asserted, in the case of Burma though, not without difficulty. Ch'ien Lung had not realized that with the founding of a new dynasty by the hunter chieftain Alompra and as a reaction to the activities of European merchants and warships disturbing the coast, the habitually gentle Burmese had developed genuine military ardour and a mood of conquering bravado. This made them exasperatingly casual in their redress or rather in their promise of redress of the serious



grievances of Chinese merchants trading in the frontier market town of Bhamo. Goods were stolen, others not paid for, quarrels arose, a Chinaman got killed. The already highly electric situation was charged still further by complications with some Shan tribes, head hunting in the mountain jungles and malarious valleys along which the boundaries of Burma and Yünnan run. In the explosion which occurred at the end of 1765, the Chinese were badly beaten, on their own ground too, for the Burmese, in hot pursuit of some chieftain defaulting in his annual payment of tribute, had actually marched into the Chinese province and plundered it to their hearts' content.

Ch'ien Lung, rightly judging that military invulnerability was the keystone of the whole vast structure of the Sino-Manchu Empire, after having ordered the responsible Viceroy to commit suicide, dispatched a large army under General Ming Jui to wipe out the disgrace.

Burma was invaded in her turn, but Ming Jui, grown overconfident by initial victories, ventured too far from his base and suddenly found himself cut off and caught in a pitiless circle of vastly superior enemy forces. He ordered the bulk of his soldiers to save themselves as best they could, while he himself with a picked regiment made a heroic stand to show the Burmese "how Manchus fight in the face of death."

This disaster necessitated a second expedition, which invaded Burma in three columns under the command of Fu-hêng, O-kuei and O-li-kun. The latter died of sickness at Bhamo, and Fu-hêng's health was so completely shattered that he passed away the next year on his return to Peking. But at least he had the satisfaction of having prepared the ground for a workable treaty of peace and amity between the two countries and of having convinced the Burmese of the advisability of acknowledging Manchu overlordship to the extent of sending tribute every ten years.

Starting in 1788 this was kept up for a century.

Siam paid tribute too. So did Annam, till the legitimate sovereign, Li Wei chi, was chased out of palace and country by an overgrown minister, Yuan Wen hui. Fleeing to China the dispossessed monarch asked to be reinstated.

Ch'ien Lung, ever on the watch to make the weight of his power duly felt by his neighbours, did send an army into Annam. It reached the capital Hanoi with triumphant roll of drums and waving of banners. There, however, celebrating the New Year not wisely but too well, the Annamites fell on it and made it march out and home in pitiful remnants considerably faster than it had marched in.

As usual, though, Ch'ien Lung had a second army in reserve to wipe out the blunders of the first one. Its commander-in-chief, Fu K'ang-an, manœuvred with such skill, the usurper sent his nephew post-haste to Peking to tender his submission in all humility. It was accepted and in 1790 the ex-rebel was given a silver gilt seal crested with a camel in token of his investiture by the Emperor of China with the crown of Annam, while the outwitted ex-King, reduced to the rank of a fourth class Chinese official, settled down sadly to the grey routine of weak tea and small-talk in the second best society of Peking.

To his own rebels of the Gold River districts Ch'ien Lung meted out very different treatment. The numerous troop movements necessitated by the Burmese campaigns had re-kindled the war-fever never wholly extinct among the southwestern Miao Tze.

News of general Ming Jui's disaster were eagerly discussed and set Solopan musing as to whether he had not kept his promise of submission quite long enough. The tragically inevitable friction between well-organized settlers overflowing from densely-populated provinces into the wilds which the natives looked upon as their sole and inalienable patrimony, had accumulated so much antagonism, it only needed the hope of victory to make the ill-tamed tribes leap to arms and fall murdering, burning and plundering on the detested Chinese.

During four bitter years (1772-76), favoured by the difficulties of climate and country, further enhanced by chains of rock-built forts, they defied Imperial authority, and from time to time massacred Imperial regiments or slew an Imperial general.

But in Ch'ien Lung they had an opponent from whose vocabulary the word discouragement had been permanently erased. Let the expense of enforcing control run into 70 million silver taels, to give way before rebels was an impossible, an inconceivable thing. In O-kuei he at last found the officer able to carry out his plans for the definite subjugation of the tribes.

To them, ceaselessly harried by this brilliant general, discouragement now became a cruelly familiar term. Munitions and war-fever spent in the long-drawn-out struggle, their spirits flagged at seeing none of their local triumphs lead to the decisive victory they had confidently expected long before. Solopan, beginning to tremble and hoping to earn his pardon, poisoned the chieftain who had fled to him from before the Manchus and whom hitherto he had refused to surrender. He sent O-kuei the dead body and offered to parley. But Ch'ien Lung would not parley with rebels and early in 1776 Solopan



was driven to walk out of his battered fort vanquished and no longer free. He was not treated as a prisoner of war, merely as a traitor and publicly executed in Peking, a harsh act but no doubt considered necessary for striking fear into the wild untamable heart of those difficult tribes.

In 1794, in another district on the borders of Hunan and Kueichou, another group of Miao Tze revolted. The famous general, Fu K'ang-an, died on the punitive expedition sent to suppress it. Nor was the disturbance completely quelled before 1796. Previously, in 1786, the natives of Formosa, reinforced by descendants of Koxinga's pirate crews, also made trouble sufficiently grave to necessitate the dispatch of 12,000 men under the command of no less a general than this same Fu K'ang-an. After some sharp but severe fighting which bled the rebels submissively white, order was restored and a life of peace and useful work again made possible for the honest elements of the island population.

Yet earlier, in 1774, a minor disturbance had occurred in Shantung, under the leadership of the visionary Wang Lun. Hypnotized by the hocus-pocus of the White Lily Society he gave its newly resumed underground burrowings a political and avowedly anti-dynastic turn. But it only took one month to suppress his wind-born rising.

Seven years later, in 1781, black turbaned Mahommedan fanatics rioted at the other end of the Empire, in Western Kansu. Some very energetic shooting was needed before they could be brought back to reason. Nevertheless at that period these sporadic outbursts had no deeper significance. They were mere splutterings of those tendencies to crime and turbulence from which no large community has ever yet been kept entirely immune, and disturbed the ordinary current of peaceful prosperity as little as the mutter of strikes, the crimes of the slums, the tribal risings on the fringe of modern world-empires affect the activities of the bulk of mankind to-day.

Only towards the very end of Ch'ien Lung's reign did the affluence which his able stewardship had done so much to foster among his subjects, begin to show symptoms of those weaknesses insidiously latent in any prolonged period of security and ease. Not only that vast accumulations of wealth began to lure the ruling classes from the simple hardy ways of K'ang Hsi and that the marvellous ingenuity of artists and craftsmen fostered love of possession, but what was far more serious, the Chinese people, fully recovered from the convulsions incident on the fall of the Mings, waxing proud and strong again, were beginning to forget to whom they owed their prosperity and in

secret meetings of irresponsible hot-heads to dream of liberation from the Manchus and of a return to national independence, unluckily without the vaguest idea of the practical requirements and difficulties of self-government. That of course made it all the more exciting to join a branch of the White Lily or of the Eight Trigram or the "Heavenly Reason Society" and to fancy oneself a full-fledged patriot because one got drunk on words and inflated with fantastic schemes. There was no concentration of effort on the gaining of some one definite point, as for instance the equality of Manchu and Chinese officials, a point which, considering the difficulties the Emperor frequently experienced with his own clansmen, he might have been glad to concede so as to give his authority a wider basis, but naturally only provided he could implicitly depend on Chinese loyalty.

Instead, the organizers of national aspirations rushed to extremes and plotted for nothing less than the overthrow of the dynasty, though obviously any such attempt would let loose hells of anarchy and bloodshed on the unfortunate people.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### SUMMIT AND END

**N**O doubt some of the risings which, starting in 1796, the year of Ch'ien Lung's abdication, troubled his successor Chia Ching till 1804, were due to oppression by local magistrates—many of whom by the way were Chinese. Among the numbers needed to fill the public services of so vast an empire knaves and fools could not be entirely excluded. On these falls the blame for the wide spread of the movement and the dilatoriness with which it was repressed. But the root idea of the White Lily and kindred rebellions, void of any constructive purpose and like all merely anti-groups limited to crude hating and hitting, sprang from the confused brains of fanatics, who worked themselves and their adherents up to a semi-religious frenzy at secret meetings, in lone places, in haunted graves, among sepulchral ruins of some Ming princes' burial-grounds. Passionate, excitable, childishly injudicious, agitators not leaders, bilious grumblers, without either conscience or consciousness of how political rights are acquired, maintained and made of genuine service, their worthlessness, the crass stupidity of their line of opposition, far more than government incompetence, arrested the natural process of absorption of the Manchus by the Chinese, which had already fully set in under K'ang Hsi, and instead tore deep rifts through the state at the very time, when, in face of threatening collisions with the commercial powers of Europe, reliable, thoroughly disciplined team work was needed most.

It was a case of donkeys too full of beans, trying to cut capers on the ice.

Ch'ien Lung, who *had* a conscience and who knew not only that the good of the people had always been his chief aim, but that he had attained it to a rare degree, was perfectly right when he muttered old Tibetan incantations against the ring-leaders asking Heaven to draw swift extinction down upon them. With sixty years of practical experience behind him, he saw what frightful misery would befall the country

if schemes of a Ming restoration were allowed to materialize.

Another experienced observer, Lord Macartney, sent by England on a special embassy to China in 1793, also noted the dangerous character of "certain mysterious societies, who often hold their secret assemblies, where they revive the memory of ancient independence, brood over recent injuries and meditate revenge," their mole-like activities "hollowing out the ground under the vast superstructure" of Manchu power. Indeed, perhaps unconsciously influenced by the wish of having to deal with a China weak enough to be made as happy a hunting-ground for English Clives, Hastings and commercial travellers as India, he even over-estimated the danger, prophesying that he might well live to see "the dislocation and dismemberment of the Ch'ing Empire."

In this he and the underground plotters were to be disappointed. For two reasons. In the first place, the taint of corruption introduced by Ho Shen, Ch'ien Lung's last Prime Minister, had spread neither deeply nor far. The public services on the whole functioned with all their former precision and excellence. Under a master like Ch'ien Lung, himself setting the example of close and intelligent application to public business, anything else would have been impossible, as Lord Macartney himself concedes when he says "that the momentum impressed on the government machine by the vigour and wisdom of the present Emperor may keep it steady and entire in its orbit for a considerable time longer."

Secondly, and this he failed to appreciate in its full importance, neither the broad masses nor the leading classes at all shared the discontent of the sectarians. On the contrary, they were exceedingly contented because they were exceedingly prosperous and looked up with grateful adoration to the Emperor who truly was a Son of Heaven. For centuries their country had not enjoyed such a spell of security on the frontiers and peace at home, the whole body of mediocrities leavened by a handful of able men, which constitutes a nation, marching to the measure of the mighty will of a just and benevolent government, strong to protect the honest and repress the criminal, to keep roads repaired, canals dredged, dikes and forts properly maintained. The resultant sense of stability manifested itself in an abundance of employment, expanding tillage, of lucrative trade, thriving industries, state finances so well balanced, the land-tax could be remitted four times, and that notwithstanding expensive wars of conquest, phenomenal building activities and dazzling magnificence at Court, dazzling, yet perfectly healthy,



for it could by no means be branded as the heartless luxury of the few amidst the poverty of the many. It rather represented the crowning outburst, the topmost blossoming of the accumulated wealth of a whole people.

The Imperial palaces were by no means the only ones in Peking. A crowd of rich families, nobles, merchants, ministers, also built themselves sumptuous mansions decorated with exquisitely carved woodwork, furnished with heavy chests full of gorgeous silks and furs, with long lacquer tables displaying porcelains, jades and coral trees, with enormous cupboards stacked with books and picture-rolls, with couches inlaid with cloisonné.

The monasteries, too, with their abundance of bronze images and incense bowls, brocade-bound manuscripts and jewelled shrines were vast repositories of treasure. Besides, public granaries and private warehouses were full to overflowing, shops and markets crowded with goods and customers. And this prosperity prevailed not only in the capital but in hundreds of cities nestling with well-built, well-kept temples, houses, banks and shops round the bright tiled bell-tower and drum-tower within the grey ring of their walls.

The population, estimated at 180 millions in 1750, by 1795 almost reached 300, a remarkable increase, of which only a small part can be attributed to new territorial acquisitions.

The purchasing power of these busy millions was so considerable, merchants from the ends of the world tumbled over each other in their eagerness to supply its wants. In spite of grumblings at Government restrictions, which limited foreign sea-borne trade to Canton, and Russian land trade to Kiachta, profits were so great, often a clear 300 per cent., European firms were constantly seeking to expand the area and volume of their business. England alone sent sixty shiploads of cloaks and woollens a year, and would gladly have sent ten times as many. But the Ch'ings, unlike the Yüans, had no desire to allow swarms of cosmopolitan adventurers to suck their subjects dry. Instinctively they distrusted that new world of many flags, heavy guns, drunken sailors, insinuating priests, and pushing traders whose inner urge was nothing nobler than an inordinate lust of power and what Mong Tze had denounced as the root of many evils, unscrupulous pursuit of profit.

The goal which the great Manchu Emperor pursued was a satisfied, self-sufficient China, not self-centred as is often assumed, but serenely cradled in the vast cosmic harmony, in the Tao of the Universe, she alone of all nations had understood from the beginning. It clearly would have meant a serious

straying from the Way to indulge that inquisitive hankering after foreign toys and novelties which European merchants laboured hard to stimulate. From every view-point it was wiser to encourage quiet content with the resources at hand and their conscientious, calm development. Of these resources the ones prized most were not so much the dead values of mines as the live ones of creative human skill. Probably at no time or place in the history of the world were craftsmen more active, more ingenious, more encouraged than in the China of Ch'ien Lung. Manipulating with equal dexterity every kind of material, metals, stone, pottery, wood, horn, leather, amber, lacquer, mother-of-pearl, the output of their myriads of looms, lathes, kilns and workshops was amazing in quantity, endless in variety, ranging from tiny eggshell vases light and translucent as a bubble, to massive bronze lions and solid blocks of sculptured jade, from the plain blue glazed tea-cups of simple folks to the huge fish bowls of the rich covered with multi-coloured flowers, and triumphal arches of green and yellow majolica.

And they all were bright, happy, laughing things, displayed in streets gay with golden shop-fronts and vivid sign-posts, spread out in houses with ceilings painted in strong blues and greens, with red doors, red pillars, red candles, red thresholds, elaborate lanterns tasselled with red, red bats and characters promising the five great happinesses from every corner of the room. So much skill, fantasy, and loving care had gone into the making of beautiful objects, the fashion to amass them became irresistible. Antiques, of course, had always been and continued to be assiduously collected. But now there were collectors of new things also. For instance, the chief minister, Ho Shen, had a mania for snuff-bottles and possessed over 2,000 of these exquisite trinkets. The abundance was so great that after 130 years of the most reckless wear and tear, the mere remnants still gladden an impoverished world with glimpses of the old enchantment. While in the hey-day of their production, they succeeded in keeping an insatiable home-market and an expanding foreign trade fully supplied. And this they achieved without poisoning whole districts with belching chimneys, without crushing all joy and dignity out of work by reducing the workers to dehumanized slaves of frenzied machines. The twofold problem of how to combine mass production with artistic value, of how to balance wages, prices and profits in a manner ensuring a maximum of employment and of purchasing power had been perfectly solved by the guilds of merchants and artisans, their methods based on



immemorial experience. Indeed, much brain power, probably the best intelligence of the Chinese people, was at that time drawn into the magic circle of artistic craftsmanship, filling it with such exuberant vitality, it could impose its taste on many European industries, imprint its patterns on European porcelains, silks and furniture and teach Rococo its most graceful convolutions.

This abounding energy was due to the fact that the whole period, gay and prosperous, found its most congenial expression in these art-crafts rather than in any of the pure great arts. Not that there was any deliberate sacrifice of past achievement, any conscious slackening of the rejuvenating impulse given to painting by the four Wangs, Wang Shi min, Wang Kien, Wang Hui and Wang Yüan-chi, who fixed the great horizons of K'ang Hsi's reign in their majestic landscapes. But somehow there crept in a lingering on pretty detail, a light-hearted resting on the surface, which tended to make copyists and craftsmen overshadow the original artist with his heart-wringing quests.

Without problems, without misgivings or cares, at peace in complete attainment, the age of Ch'ien Lung could not burn with the lyrical ardour of the T'angs, nor darken into the haunting wistfulness of the Sungs. It was attuned to dignity, wealth and elegance. Lord Macartney, though accustomed to the most brilliant Courts of Europe, was profoundly impressed :

“ The material and distribution of the furniture within the Emperor's tent at once displayed grandeur and elegance. The tapestry, the curtains, the carpets, the lanterns, the fringes, and the tassels were disposed with such harmony, the colours so artfully varied, the light and shade so judiciously managed, that the whole assemblage filled the eye with delight and diffused over the mind a pleasing serenity and repose undisturbed by glitter or affected embellishments. The commanding feature of the ceremony was that calm dignity, that sober pomp of Asiatic greatness which European refinements have not yet attained.”

Indeed, it recalled to his mind what he had once considered “ a true representation of the highest pitch of human greatness and felicity.”

Greatness and felicity—having achieved these, it was natural for that contented age to bask serenely in the sunshine of its luck, to crowd every available surface with jubilant colours and captivating forms, to revel in full-blown peonies, in bright plumed birds, in immense panoramas of blue hills, white clouds, green slopes and the ample flowing of clear streams, in life-size portraits of solemn officials and their virtuous wives, embroidered robes spread wide around them, patterned carpets at

their feet and a background of their choicest curios on the capricious zigzag of blackwood shelves, carved into further patterns.

The influence of the Jesuit Court painters, like Castiglione and Attiret, with their pomposity and their display, worked in the same direction. They, in friendly rivalry with Chinese artists, besides full-length portraits of the Imperial family and distinguished public men, painted scenes of Ch'ien Lung hunting, of Ch'ien Lung reviewing victorious troops, of Ch'ien Lung travelling on the Yangtze, of Ch'ien Lung receiving tribute at the New Year celebrations in the Palace of Peking, long rolls, whole series of pictures or engravings inspired by the eagerness to fix moments saturated with happiness in some semblance of eternity. Unimportant as pure art, they are invaluable as historic documents, excellent as decorative panels. Altogether a good deal of painting had become ancillary to the craft of the decorator of interiors, always a wonderful wood carver, and in his turn subordinate to the builder or rather the architect. Of all artists the architects achieved most under Ch'ien Lung, setting the old lines of massive pillar and weighty sweepingly curved roof in a sumptuous frame of glittering gold and of chiselled marbles, whole flights of sculptured stairs flanking gigantic monoliths, the Spirit Way alive with the rustle of phoenix wings and the glide of dragon coils.

Ch'ien Lung, poet, scholar, artist, had that masterly comprehensiveness of mind which made him the greatest restorer of ancient buildings and the first to experiment in an absolutely novel style—novel in China ; in Europe it was merely a resurrection of Greek columns and Roman arches.

In 1711 Ch'ien Lung had his country residence, Yüan Ming Yüan, "the Garden of Circular Radiance," reconstructed according to plans furnished by the Court Jesuits. Some of the effects achieved by combining the grace and colour of Chinese majolicas with the strength of Italian window-frames were distinctly pleasing. Nevertheless, the experiment did not take and since its burning by the English and the French in 1860 this Sino-Baroque building has shrivelled into a rapidly disappearing ruin.

His more valuable work, the restoration of ancient monuments, survived much better. He delighted in visits to the wonderful temples which in those days hallowed almost every mountain range with the glory of their pine trees and the music of their bells. He ordered the poems they inspired to be engraved on marble in his own scholarly calligraphy and set up in the temple grounds near some dreamy shrine, some tower-



ing pagoda beneath the blue dome of the sky. Substantial gifts for improvements and repairs followed as well and practically throughout the length and breadth of his Empire scarcely any place of artistic or historical importance was omitted from the purview of his loving care.

Eleven times he worshipped on the height of T'ai Shan, glorious with memories of old achievements which he could proudly feel he had fully equalled. He also showed his reverence for the wisdom of China's greatest sage by presenting ritual bronzes of the Chou dynasty to K'ung Fu Tzū's temple in his native city of Chu Fu.

Following his grandfather's example, he made frequent tours of inspection, particularly to those important links between North and South, the Yangtze provinces. In the intervals of checking the accounts and conduct of viceroys and governors, he would convene the shining lights among the local scholars to literary tournaments, their verses, essays and epigrams competing for the favour of a prize.

Also, like K'ang Hsi, he was a splendid shot with bow and arrow, and loved the hunting expeditions in the hills and forests beyond the Great Wall. Indeed, he could well have used the very words K'ang Hsi wrote about what was first only a favourite hunting camp and said :

" Ofttimes I travelled to the banks of the Yangtze and gazed on the opulent grace of the South . . . wandered among the Long White Mountains where heights and rivers are sternly majestic, men and things still true to primitive life.

" I cannot recall all the scenes of my travels, but none have I chosen, nor wish to dwell in, but only here in the Vale of Je Ho. . . ."  
" In its lonely wilds I gather my heart."

Begun in 1703, constantly added to and improved by K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung, the Pi Shu Shan Huang (the Cool Summer Mountain Residence), they built themselves there, soon added fame to the natural beauty of Jehol. It combined the formal style of a government building with the rustic simplicity of a woodland retreat, the irresponsible gaiety of coquettish pavilions, dedicated to happy moments of leisure, with the solemnity of temples in which the chanting of liturgies marked the passing hours. With its wonderful interlacing of streams and hills, of lakes and valleys, of frowning crags and smiling glens, it provided a picturesque site for every fancy, every mood. And to all these lovely spots the Emperors gave a lovely name, calling one mountain crest the " Trysting place of winds and clouds," another " the Infinite Beauty of horizons," a third the " Rest house of the scudding mists."

Some salient rocks projecting into the red of dawn would be called "Cliffs of flowing Radiance"; some lonely mere "Mirroring Depths and misty Heights"; some sheltered nook the "Song of Orioles in rustling grove"; a forest clearing "Cypress breath of a thousand glades"; an orchard valley as "Pear blossoms longing for the moon." Along the brooks foaming down or flowing placidly through "Fields where horses are exercised," through lawns full of tame deer, favourite places were singled out as "Gleaming hills in limpid waves"; as "Lotus fragrance of winding streams," as the "Dance of crystal wells and coloured spray." Indeed with the "Radiant sun of golden lilies" shining down on the "Lake of fulfilled desire," on "Islands of cool green ripples and leafy shade" and on "Bridges of reflected rainbows," on "Boulders whence to watch the fish," on "Fords for gathering water chestnuts," on "Blue-bird boats" and "Moon skiffs with white sails of clouds," on "Forests of 10,000 trees," on "Towers of rain vapours and of emerald dew," on "Summer houses of stainless gleams," on "Halls of concentrated thought," on "Terraces of complete serenity," on "Dwellings of repose and peace," on "Temples of revealed salvation," and "Everlasting guardianship," the world-old dream of some abode of perfect loveliness and bliss seemed fully realized at last.

In these harmonious surroundings, fit expression of their own personality attuned to every beauty of mind and matter, the great Manchu Emperors spent fruitful months of work and recreation. Dressed in a loose robe of yellow silk, with blue cuffs and girdle, a single pearl on his black velvet cap, Ch'ien Lung would study in the large library the "Wen Ching Ko," Hall of flowing Humanities, set apart in its own quiet courtyard of rockeries and white stemmed pines. On its shelves protected by soft blue silk curtains were piled the best editions of the choicest books, bound in brocade, also those comprehensive collections of ancient literature, the Encyclopædias, and descriptive catalogues, all those monumental publications with which his reign brilliantly carried on the tradition of scholarship begun by K'ang Hsi.

Or he would linger in some eyrië summer-house, its wide outlook spanning the void and fix the beauty of the scene in a jet of poetry:

"Transparent the lake,  
Translucent the ether,  
Widely separate the high and the low,  
Symbol of Nature's Infinitude."



“Heaven bends down  
To up-reaching Earth,  
Through limitless azure  
Fleecily float diaphanous clouds.”

He wrote many such lines. His collected poems amount to 34,000. Every morning before dawn he was carried to one of the Buddhist Temples, for he did not merely use the outer splendour of Buddhism for political ends, he looked to its inner light to sustain him in the stress of his arduous life.

It was at Jehol in September, 1793, that he received the Embassy sent by the King of England at the instance and at the expense of the East India Company eager to obtain greater facilities for their highly profitable China trade. He received it with extraordinary affability, supplying it liberally with everything needed in the way of food, attendance, lodgings, means of transportation. It cost him 5,000 taels a day and though no doubt a good quarter of this sum swelled the bank account of the officials specially charged with looking after the foreigners, these pronounced the treatment they received as “bounteous in the extreme.” So bounteous that several of the servants Lord Macartney brought with him, fell ill from over-eating and one actually died, because he had devoured forty apples at one meal.

They reached Jehol in time for the celebrations in honour of Ch’ien Lung’s birthday, his eighty-fourth. But he looked like a “hale man of 60.” He was in high good humour, the brilliant victory over the Gurkhas, the satisfactory settlement of the old Tibetan difficulties being the most recent events. Besides, it was early autumn, a season of supreme beauty in the parks and gardens of Jehol. Three ambassadors from Pegu, six from Turkestan had come to render homage, and now a powerful monarch of the Far West “beyond the confines of many seas” was also sending one to pay his respects and bear gifts to the Dragon Throne.

In the exuberance of his high spirits Ch’ien Lung went so far as to allow Macartney merely to kneel before him on one knee according to European instead of prostrating himself nine times according to Chinese etiquette.

This departure from time-honoured custom seriously shocked his own Court and he may have regretted it himself after reading the six demands of which Macartney was the bearer. Though put forward in the politest terms they certainly did not err on the side of humility, asking for nothing less than the cession of two small islands, one near Chusan, the other near Canton, as a permanent settlement for English

merchants ; also for leave to establish a warehouse in the capital itself and open trade at three other towns as well, namely, Chusan, Ningpo and Tientsin. The customs dues were to be reduced to the former figure nor changed at the discretion of local officials. Ch'ien Lung, just then at the height of his power, must have been incensed with proposals which really put his vast prosperous and highly civilized Empire in the same class as the disintegrating realm of the Great Mogul. Echoes of his anger still seem to rumble through the paragraphs of the answer he sent the King of England fully setting forth the reasons for turning down every one of the six demands :

“ Yesterday your Ambassador petitioned my Ministers to memorialize me regarding your trade with China, but his proposal is inconsistent with our dynastic usage and cannot be entertained. Hitherto all European nations, including your own, have carried on their trade with our Celestial Empire at Canton. Such has been the procedure for many years, though our Celestial Empire possesses all things in abundance and lacks no product within its own borders. There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of foreigners in exchange for our own goods. But as the tea, silk and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we have permitted as a signal favour, that a committee of Chinese merchants (hong) be officially licensed to trade with the foreigners at Canton.” (This privilege included responsibility for the behaviour of the foreigners and for the debts incurred on both sides.)

“ Thus your wants are supplied and your country participates in our beneficence. But your ambassador has now put forward new requests which completely fail to recognize the Throne's principle to treat strangers from afar with indulgence. . . . Your England is not the only nation trading at Canton. If others following your bad example, wrongfully importune my ear with further impossible requests, how will it be possible for me to treat them with easy indulgence ? ”

The request for the cession of islands for a trading settlement seems to have alarmed him most. Not unnaturally, for by 1793 it was well known in the East that such a seemingly harmless settlement often came to be utilized as the thin end of the wedge of conquest. There is the ominous growl of the watch-dog, the sharp warning against trespassers in the following :

“ Every inch of the territory of our Empire is marked on the map and strictest vigilance exercised over it all : even tiny islets and far-lying sand-banks are clearly defined as part of the province to which they belong. . . . Supposing that other nations were to imitate your bad example and beseech me to present them each and all with a site for trading purposes, how could I possibly comply ? This also is a flagrant infringement of the usage of my Empire and cannot possibly be entertained.”

The profound distrust of European aims aroused by the



restless activity of Russia in the North, of Spain, Portugal, Holland in the South, of England and France in India, of Roman Catholic Missionaries everywhere was the real reason for Macartney's failure.

The French Father Grammont, living in Peking, attributed it to a number of minor points, the intrigues of a Portuguese missionary, who out of envy seized every opportunity for blackening the English in the eyes of the Chinese; ignorance of Chinese etiquette, and refusal to comply with its prime requisite the deep prostration before the Throne; omission to provide suitable presents for the Emperor's sons and ministers, and above all the incompetence of their interpreter. He had been picked up at Naples in the college founded by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to educate the young Chinese smuggled out of their country by missionaries. Macartney describes him as amiable and well-mannered and as thoroughly conversant with Latin and Italian. But since he probably was as thoroughly ignorant of the elegant Chinese spoken by Ch'ien Lung, besides being of no family or social standing whatsoever—a serious handicap in a Court where pride of race was not only powerful but had not yet lost any of its justification—he no doubt unwittingly was a source of many blunders.

Grammont's further comment that the Embassy "presented themselves in clothes which were too plain and too common" seems hypercritical. Macartney prided himself on the care he took of his own appearance and that of all the members of his suite and no doubt, escorted by his train of music, guards, palanquins and officers and gentlemen of the Embassy on horseback, he cut quite a brilliant figure in his "spotted mulberry velvet" over which he wore the wide mantle of the Order of the Bath with collar, diamond badge, diamond star, "hat and plumes of feathers."

But those unknown makers of opinion, domestic servants, "clearly comprehended the inferior value of the gold lace trimming that decorated the liveries of the Embassy," and of course all European clothes even of that aristocratic age faded into utter insignificance before the splendour of the Manchu robes, sumptuous satins and brocades exquisitely embroidered with multicoloured silk and real gold thread figuring Dragons, clouds, waves, flowers, birds and other heraldic animals, all the wonderful old symbols elaborated into amazingly rich and beautiful designs.

Indeed, Ch'ien Lung's reign was one superb elaboration of the salient points of Chinese culture, maybe the utmost ex-

tension of its range of possibilities. The raiment of fine linen which Yao had bestowed on Shun had been fashioned into robes of every kind of cut and colour and material.

The few rough earthenware jars the same Shun had moulded with his own hands on the banks of the river had grown into an incredible quantity of porcelains with thousands of different shapes, glazes and degrees of translucency.

The simple log hall where Shun's successor the great Yü had received the tribute of furs, feather, woven fabrics, arrow-points, lacquer, cinnabar, pearls, had expanded into the Purple City with its vast succession of glittering palaces and marble courtyards to which the nomads from beyond the moving Sands brought tribute of jade and horses and the Gurkhas from beyond the Himalayas tribute of gold and elephants, while even Europe sent its clocks and guns and telescopes.

The altar of beaten clay and the plain ancestral temple had bred a progeny of the most magnificent sanctuaries; the sacrificial vessels of massive bronze with their severe geometrical designs had decked themselves with the multicoloured floral arabesques of well-polished cloisonnés.

The scarce and cumbersome books of bamboo had multiplied into millions of volumes beautifully printed on light paper and the instinctive knowledge of a few rudimentary facts by which men used to guide the course of their lives had swelled into gigantic encyclopædias of accumulated experiences and deductions from which men reasoned out their schemes of existence.

With unerring judgment K'ang Hsi and Ch'ien Lung had followed the great lines of China's innate destiny. Therefore adding success to success they had made her large and powerful, an economic political and cultural entity paramount in Asia, its growing millions employed on useful and congenial tasks, its centrifugal tendencies fully controlled, its frontiers secure, its colonial conquests knit to it so firmly they still linger in its orbit. When in his vigorous old age, that crowning blessing of an exceptionally rich life, Ch'ien Lung looked back on this almost unparalleled union of military glory, material prosperity and artistic efflorescence, beauty, order and happiness springing up everywhere at the touch of his hand, no wonder even his experienced eye mistook the greatness of his reign for a midday splendour to be followed by a long and brilliant afternoon, never dreaming that it only was a sunset glory, beyond which night lay waiting, moonless, starless, black with storms, storms which were not weathered.



His successor, Ch'ia Ching, though he had selected him with great care from among his surviving sons, lacked his father's and grandfather's remarkable talents. For this he cannot be blamed, but he did not, like his grandfather, Yung Chêng, attempt to make up for his deficiencies by that conscientious application to duty which often provides an excellent substitute for natural gifts.

On the contrary he let himself degenerate into a worthless voluptuary. With the result that the iron bonds of discipline, essential to any ruling minority, began to rust and loosen, an evil which, on account of the absence of any gleam of constructive political intelligence on the part of the majority and of persistent pressure from new and terrifically well-armed enemies was to spell disaster.

But as long as Ch'ien Lung lived, his magnetic personality and the example he set of closest attention to public affairs made the iron bonds hold firm. To Macartney the regularity, alertness and dispatch "shown in the execution of their duties by the mandarins appointed to attend on the Embassy appeared perfectly wonderful."

"Indeed," he writes, "the machinery and authority of the Government are so organized and so powerful as almost immediately to surmount every difficulty and to produce every effect that human strength can accomplish." And this outside the immediate range of the Emperor's eye.

Of the reception he attended at the Court in Jehol he speaks equally enthusiastically :

"The order and regularity in serving and removing the dinner was marvellously exact and every function of the ceremony performed with such silence and solemnity as in some measure to resemble the celebration of a religious mystery."

If only Ch'ien Lung's lease of life and strength could have been prolonged far into the next century ! In 1786, when he was seventy-five, he had given a huge banquet to 4,000 grey-beards over sixty.

Ten years later, in 1796, he gave another such feast. Among his guests, who this time numbered 6,000, several were a hundred years old, tottering relics of the wonderful days when the great K'ang Hsi rode out to his victorious wars. K'ang Hsi had long been gathered to his fathers, Yung Chêng carried to his grave. And now in the unceasing flow of time a touch of the weariness of age began to creep over Ch'ien Lung also. Like K'ang Hsi he had reigned an entire Chinese cycle of sixty years and unwilling to reign longer than his revered grand-

father, he determined to abdicate in favour of his fifteenth son, Prince Chia.

The year before he still received the embassy of Isaac Titsingh and Andrew van Braam, sent by Holland to further trade interests under cover of bringing congratulations for the sixtieth anniversary of the Emperor's accession. Owing to the bad impression left by Macartney's six demands, all they obtained was that the Emperor expressed himself favourably about the humility of their bearing, and laughed out loud when van Braam's hat rolled off, while he was not without difficulty prostrating his somewhat plump body at the steps of the Throne.

This was in February, 1795, and one of the last episodes of the reign.

In the twelfth moon of the same year (January, 1796), Ch'ien Lung announced his abdication to the Spirits of Heaven and Earth, of the Harvest and Grains, of the Dynastic Ancestors. Then at the New Year celebrations (February, 1796), enthroned in the T'ai Ho Tien, the Great Hall of Supreme Harmony, surrounded by all the princes, grandsons, dukes and prominent men in their most magnificent apparel, his son kneeling at his feet, Ch'ien Lung handed him the Imperial seal. Thus of his own free will he made one of the most glorious reigns in the troubled annals of the world close with a superbly dignified gesture of surrender. His heir took "Ch'ia Ching" (Admirable Blessing) as his reign name, Ch'ien Lung the title of "T'ai Shang Huang ti" (Supremely exalted sovereign Lord).

Withdrawn from the ordinary routine of government, he would linger over his favourite books in the restful Library of the Hall of Serene Old Age (Lo Shou T'ang); or look at favourite pictures in the well-screened Porch of Harmonious Peace (I Ho Hsien). On the long scroll of thirty-four horses painted by Castiglione in the reign of Yung Chên, he would recognize the pony he rode as a boy and in token of approval have his new Seal of T'ai Shang Huang ti impressed in red above it.

Through his favourite Ho Shen, still the leading minister, he kept in touch with the general current of events and his will remained paramount in serious decisions. Only for another three years.

In the autumn of 1798 his vigour suddenly left him. In February, 1799, he lay in the Palace of his old age, the Yang Hsin Tien, the Hall for Nourishing the Mind, paralysed, a dying man. The hour of the Dragon (7-9 a.m.) was his last on earth.



As his eyes closed to the long level winter sunbeams just beginning to enkindle the sheen on the yellow brocade of his quilts and pillows, to intensify the glow of the lucky symbols on the crimson lacquer of his bedroom door, to glitter like silver in the white stemmed pines outside the windows, like gold on the glaze of the deep slanting tiles, did they open up beyond the void he was crossing to visions of what he had experienced in the days of his strength with such a vital intensity, it surely was echoing still in the fields of Eternity with their infinite remembrance of bygone loveliness? Did he see them wave again the dragon emblazoned banners of his armies, as he welcomed them back from victorious campaigns? Did it enfold him once more the lily fragrance of exquisite nights in the Pavilion of Immaculate Radiance on the enchanted island between the lapping of the lake and the glitter of the moon? Did he hear them anew the hoofs of swift horses, galloping over forest edged fields in dew damp freshness of early dawn? Did he sense again the mystic presence of ineffable Powers in gold pillared temples widening, now expanding, breaking into supreme ecstatic fusion with the soul of the Divine?

None of them knew of all the sons, grandsons and officials wailing round the coffin in which his dead body was laid, dressed in the dark blue robes of longevity. It was a sumptuous coffin of red lacquer inside, black lacquer outside with the mountain landscapes he loved so much, painted on it in glowing gold, a full blown lotus at the feet.

Three months later, spring-leaves green on every tree, he was carried out of the Purple City along the road he had often followed to worship at his ancestors' Tablets in the Eastern Tombs near the Hills of Resplendent Bliss. There a full half-century before, not far from Shun Chih's Mausoleum, he had built his own. And there in the deep vault dimly lit by lamps burning 10,000 years, beneath the folds of the yellow silk catafalque he lies buried, the breath of cypress trees blowing above him as it still blows around the Jade Lute pavilions where he once wrote poems to the skies of Jehol. Chia Ch'ing named the sepulchre Yü ling, the Sepulchre of Enrichment. He also ordered a mourning period of three years. Fate has prolonged it to this day. For it is not only Ch'ien Lung who lies entombed in the darkness of that grave, but a whole epoch, its gaiety and its gravity, its faith and its fears, its courage and its confidence, its ideals and its dreams. For all time?—Or does the wind in the evergreens whisper that like every creation of consummate beauty, it is only waiting in the night of neglect for a return to the day of understanding, the day

of marvellous re-birth, when the milestone which replaced that of the Ch'ings, a queer-shaped cement object scribbled over with yet queerer misspelt words illegible to all but a handful of theorists taught abroad, can be replaced by yet another, new, but inscribed with ancient wisdom and moulded on the great predestined lines consonant with the Tao of Heaven, Earth and Man.



# TABLES OF DYNASTIES

## I. THE AGE OF THE THREE SOVEREIGNS (SAN HUANG) AND THE FIVE EMPERORS (WU TI)

*Mythological*

Supposed Duration about 750 years

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>T'AI HAO</b> Son of Hoa-siu and the footprints of a giant Born in Cheng Ki (Kan- suh) Died in Honan	4477 End of reign 4363	Fu-hsi Shih P'ao-hsi Shih	Ch'en on the Ts'ai River (Honan)
<b>YEN TI</b> Son of Niu-teng and a Dragon Reigned 120 years Buried in Ch'ang sha (Hunan)	3217 End of reign 3078	Shên nung Shih The divine Hus- bandman Lie-shan Shih	K'iu fu (Shan- tung)
<b>HUANG TI</b> Son of Fu Pao and a flash of Lightning Born in Honan Died aged 111 Buried on Mount Kiao (Shensi)	2697 End of reign 2599	Yu-hsiung Shih Hsien-yüan Shih	

## I. THE AGE OF THE FIVE RULERS

*Mythological*

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.
<b>CHUAN HSÜ</b> Son of Ch'ang-i, son of Huang Ti Died 2515. Age 98 Buried in Shantung	2598	Kao-yang Shih
<b>TI K'U</b> Grandson of Hsiun Hsiao, Son of Huang-Ti Buried in Chihli	2436	Kao-hsin Shih
<b>TI CHIH</b> Son of Ti K'u	2366 Deposed after a reign of 9 years	

## I. THE AGE OF THE FIVE EMPERORS (WU TI)

*Historical melting into the Legendary*

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>T'ang Ti YAO</b> Son of Ti K'u Died 2258	2357 Abdicates in favour of Shun : 2285	T'ao-t'ang Shih Fang-hsün	P'ing Yang (Shansi)
<b>SHUN</b> Son of Ku sou (descend- ant of the Emperor Chuan Hsü) Born in Yü mu in Honan Died 2208	2255 Abdicates in favour of Yü : 2224	Yu-Yü Shih	P'o Fan (Shansi)

## II. THE HSIA DYNASTY : 2205-1766 B.C.

Family : Se

*Historical*

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.
<b>The Great YÜ</b> Son of Kun and Hsiu-chi Born in Shi-niu (Szechuan) Died 2197 in Chekiang	2205
<b>CH'I</b> Son of Yü	2197
<b>T'AI K'ANG</b> Son of Ch'i	2188 Deposed and exiled
<b>CHUNG K'ANG</b> Son of Ch'i	2159
<b>HSIANG</b> Son of Chung K'ang	2146
<b>SHAO K'ANG</b> Son of Hsiang	2079
<b>CH'U</b> Son of Shao K'ang	2057
<b>HUAI</b> Son of Ch'u	2040



II. THE HSIA DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.
<b>MANG</b> Son of Huai	2014
<b>HSIEH</b> Son of Mang	1996
<b>PU CHIANG</b> Son of Hsieh	1980
<b>CHIUNG</b> Son of Hsieh	1921
<b>CHIN</b> Son of Chiung	1900
<b>K'UNG CHIA</b> Son of Pu Chiang	1879
<b>KAO</b> Son of K'ung Chia	1848
<b>FA</b> Son of Kao	1837
<b>CHIEH KUEI</b> Son of Fa Died 1766	1818 Deposed and exiled 1766

## III. THE SHANG OR YIN DYNASTY : 1766-1122 B.C.

Family : Tze

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>CH'ENG T'ANG</b> Son of Chou Kuei, ruler of Shang (Shensi) Died 1753	1766	T'ien-i	Po in Honau
<b>T'AI CHIA</b> Grandson of T'ang, son of T'ai-ting	1753		
<b>WU TING</b> Son of T'ai Chia	1720		

III. THE SHANG OR YIN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>T'AI KÊNG</b> Son of T'ai Chia	1691		
<b>HSIAO CHIA</b> Son of T'ai Kêng	1666		
<b>YUNG CHI</b> Son of T'ai Kêng	1649		
<b>T'AI MOU</b> Son of T'ai Kêng	1637		
<b>CHUNG TING</b> Son of T'ai Mou	1562		Transfers capital to Nao (Honan)
<b>WAI JÊN</b> Son of T'ai Mou	1549		
<b>HO TAN CHIA</b> Son of T'ai Mou	1534		
<b>TSU YI</b> Son of Ho Tan Chia	1525		
<b>TSU HSIN</b> Son of Tsu Yi	1506		
<b>WU CHIA</b> Son of Tsu Yi	1490		
<b>TSU TING</b> Son of Tsu Shin	1465		
<b>NAN KÊNG</b> Son of Wu Chia	1433		
<b>YANG CHIA</b> Son of Tsu Ting	1408		
<b>P'AN KÊNG</b> Son of Tsu Ting	1401		Transfers capital to Yin, south of the Hoang Ho. Hence Shang dynasty now called Yin



III. THE SHANG OR YIN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>HSIAO HSIN</b> Son of Tsu Ting	1373		
<b>HSIAO YI</b> Son of Tsu Ting	1352		
<b>WU TING</b> <i>Temple Name :</i> Kao Tsung Son of Hsiao Yi	1324		
<b>TSU KÊNG</b> Son of Wu Ting	1265		
<b>TSU CHIA</b> Son of Wu Ting	1258		
<b>LIN HSIN</b> Son of Tsu Chia	1225		
<b>KÊNG TING</b> Son of Tsu Chia	1219		
<b>WU YI</b> Son of Kêng Ting Killed by lightning while out hunting	1198		Transfers capital to North of the Hoang Ho
<b>T'AI TING</b> Son of Wu Yi	1194		
<b>TI YI</b> Son of T'ai Ting	1191		
<b>CHOU HSIN</b> Son of Ti Yi Died 1122 Burnt in the Stag- Tower	1154		

## IV. THE CHOU DYNASTY: 1122-255 B.C.

Duration : 874 years

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>WU WANG</b> <i>Posthumous Name :</i> Wên Wang Son of Chang, Duke of Chou Born 1169 Died 1116	1122	Fa	Feng (Shensi)
<b>CH'ÊNG WANG</b> Son of Wu Wang Died 1079	1115	Song	
<b>K'ANG WANG</b> Son of Ch'êng Wang	1078	Chao	
<b>CHAO WANG</b> Son of K'ang Wang Drowned crossing the Han River	1052	Hsia	
<b>MU WANG</b> Son of Chao Wang Died 946	1001	Man	
<b>KUNG WANG</b> Son of Mu Wang Died 933	946	Yi hu	
<b>I<sup>1</sup> WANG</b> Son of Kung Wang	934	Kien	
<b>HSIAO WANG</b> Son of Mu Wang	909	Pi Fang	
<b>I<sup>2</sup> WANG</b> Eldest son of I <sup>1</sup> Wang	894	Hsie	
<b>LI WANG</b> Son of I <sup>2</sup> Wang Died 828 in exile	878	Hu	
<b>HSÜAN WANG</b> Son of Li Wang	827	Tsing	
<b>YU WANG</b> Son of Hsüan Wang Killed at the foot of Mount Li by invading barbarians, 771	781	Kung-Huang	



IV. THE CHOU DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>P'ING WANG</b> Son of Yu Wang Died 720	770	I-Kiu	Lo yang (Shensi)
<b>HUAN WANG</b> Son of Hsie Fu, and grandson of P'ing Wang Died 697	719	Lin	
<b>CHUANG WANG</b> Son of Huan Wang Died 682	696	T'o	
<b>HSI WANG</b> Son of Chuang Wang Died 677	681	Hu T'si	
<b>HUI WANG</b> Son of Hsi Wang Died 652	676	Lang	
<b>HSIANG WANG</b> Son of Hui Wang Died 620	651	Ching	
<b>CH'ING WANG</b> Son of Hsiang Wang Died 613	618	Yen-Chên	
<b>K'UANG WANG</b> Son of Ch'ing Wang Died 607	612	Pan	
<b>TING WANG</b> Son of Ch'ing Wang Died 586	606	Yu	
<b>CHIEN WANG</b> Son of Ting Wang Died 572	585	Yi	
<b>LING WANG</b> Son of Chien Wang Died 545	571	Yi Hsin	

IV. THE CHOU DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>CHING WANG</b> Son of Ling Wang Died 525	544	Kuei	
<b>CHING WANG</b> Brother-in-law of Ching Wang Died 478	519	Kai	
<b>YÜAN WANG</b> Son of Ching Wang Died 469	475	Jên	
<b>CHÊNG TING WANG</b> Son of Yüan Wang Died 441	468	Kie	
<b>K'AO WANG</b> Son of Chêng Ting Wang Died 426	440	Wei	
<b>WEI LIEH WANG</b> Son of K'ao Wang 403. The 9 Tripods struck by lightning Died 402	425	Wu	
<b>AN WANG</b> Son of Wei Lieh Wang Died 376	401	Kiao	
<b>LIEH WANG</b> Son of An Wang Died 369	375	Hsi-an	
<b>HSIEN WANG</b> Son of An Wang Died 321	368	Pien	
<b>SHÊN CHING WANG</b> Son of Hsien Wang Died 315	320	Ting	
<b>NAN WANG</b> Son of Shên Ching Wang Dethroned by Ch'in Died childless 256	314	Yen	



IV. THE CHOU DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>TUNG CHOU CHŪN</b> Duke of Eastern Chou Son of Huan Kung Died reduced to the rank of the people in poverty and obscurity	255	Hui Kung	Con- quered by Ch'in 249

## V. THE CH'IN DYNASTY: 255-206

Family: Chao

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Personal Appellation.	Capital.
<b>CHAO HSIANG WANG</b> Son of Hui, King of Ch'in Died 251	255		
<b>HSIAO WÊN WANG</b> Son of Chao Hsiang Died 250	250		
<b>CHUANG HSIANG WANG</b> Son of Hsiao Wên Died 247	249	I-jen, later Tze Chou	
<b>CHÊNG WANG</b> , from 221 <b>SHIH HUANG- TI</b> Son of Chuang Hsiang Died 22nd July, 209, in Chihli. Age 51	246 221	Chêng	Hsien Yang (Shensi)
<b>ERH SHIH HUANG- TI</b> Son of Shih Huang-ti Forced to commit sui- cide 207. Age 23	209	Hu-Hai	

## VI. THE HAN DYNASTY

ALSO STYLED FORMER OR WESTERN HAN : 208 B.C. TO A.D. 25  
 Family : Liu Capital : Ch'ang-an (Shensi)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. B.C.
<b>KAO TI or KAO TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Pang Third son of Che Kia, given the title of T'ai Kung Born in P'ei (Kiangsu) Died 195. Aged 53	206		
<b>HUI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Ying Son of Liu Pang Born 205 Died 188. Age 24	194		
<b>KAO HOU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Lǔ Hou or Lǔ Shih (Empress) Daughter of Lǔ Shih P'ing, wife of Kao Tsu Died 180	187		
<b>WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Hêng Son of Liu Pang by a concubine Died 157. Age 46	179	Hou Yüan	163
<b>CHING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Chi Son of Liu Hêng Died 140. Age 48	156	Chung Yüan Hou Yüan	149 143
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Ch'ê Son of Liu Ch'i Born 156 Died 87. Age 71	140	Chien Yüan Yüan Kuang Yüan So Yüan Shou Yüan Ting Yüan Fêng T'ai Ch'u T'ien Han T'ai Shih Chêng Ho Hou Yüan	140 134 128 122 116 110 104 100 96 92 88



VI. THE HAN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. B.C.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. B.C.
<b>CHAO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Fu Ling Son of Liu Ch'ê Born 94 Died 74. Age 22	86	Shih Yüan Yüan Fêng Yüan P'ing	86 80 74
<b>HSÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Hsün Great-grandson of Liu Ch'ê (Wu Ti) Born 90 Died 49. Age 43	73	Pên Shih Ti Chieh Yüan K'ang Shên Chüeh Wu Fêng Kan Lu Huang Lung	73 69 65 61 57 53 49
<b>YÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Shih Son of Liu Hsün Born 75 Died 33. Age 43	48	Ch'u Yüan Yung Kuang Chien Chao Ching Ning	48 43 38 33
<b>CH'ÊNG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Ao Son of Liu Shih Died 7. Age 45	32	Chien Shih Ho P'ing Yang So Hung Chia Yung Shih Yüan Yen Sui Ho	32 28 24 20 16 12 8
<b>AI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Hsin Grandson of Liu Shih by a concubine Born 25 B.C. Died A.D. 1. Age 26	6	Chien P'ing Yüan Shou	6 2
<b>P'ING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Kan Grandson of Liu Shih by a concubine Born 8 B.C. Died A.D. 5. Age 14	A.D. 1	Yüan Shih	A.D. 1
<b>JU TZŪ YING</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Ying Great-grandson of Liu Hsin Born A.D. 4	6	Chü Shê	6

VI. THE HAN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSIN HUANG-TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wang Mang Usurper A nephew of Empress Wang, wife of Yüan Ti Born 33 B.C. Died A.D. 23	9	Shih Chien Kuo T'ien Fêng Ti Huang	9 14 20
<b>HUAI-YANG WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ti Hsüan Liu Hsüan Third cousin to Liu Hsiu, first Emperor of the Eastern Han Dynasty Died 25 Strangled by the Red Eyebrows	23	Kêng Shih	23

VII. THE LATER HAN DYNASTY OR EASTERN HAN :  
A.D. 25-220

Family : Liu

Capital : Lo yang

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KUANG WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Hsiu A descendant of Liu Pang, the first Han Emperor in the 9th degree Died A.D. 57. Age 62	25	Chien Wu Chung Yüan	25 56
<b>MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Chuang Fourth son of Liu Hsiu Died A.D. 76. Age 48	58	Yung P'ing	58



VII. THE LATER HAN DYNASTY OR EASTERN HAN (*contd.*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>CHANG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Ta Fifth son of Liu Chang Died A.D. 89. Age 33	76	Chien Ch'u Yüan Hô Chang Hô	76 84 87
<b>HO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Chao Fourth son of Liu Ta Died A.D. 106. Age 27	89	Yung Yüan Yüan Hsing	89 105
<b>SHANG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Lun Youngest son of Liu Chao Died A.D. 107. Age 2	106	Yen P'ing	106
<b>AN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Yu Grandson of Liu Ta and second cousin to Liu Lung Died 125. Age 32	107	Yung Ch'u T'ai or Yüan Ch'u Yung Ning Chien Kuang Yen Kuang	107 114  120 121 122
<b>SHUN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Pao Son of Liu Yu Died 146. Age 30	126	Yung Chien Yang Chia Yung Ho Han An Chien K'ang	126 132 136 142 144
<b>CH'UNG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Ping Son of Liu Pao Died 146. Age 2	145	Yung Chia	145
<b>CHIH TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Tsuan Great-great-grandson of Liu Ta Poisoned by Liang Chi. Died 146. Age 9	146	Pên Ch'u	146

VII. THE LATER HAN DYNASTY OR EASTERN HAN' (*contd.*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HUAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Chih Great-grandson of Liu Ta Died 168. Age 36	147	Chien Ho Ho P'ing Yüan Chia Yung Hsing Yung Shou Yen Hsi Yung K'ang	147 150 151 153 155 158 169
<b>LING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Hung Great-great-grandson of Liu Ta Died 189. Age 34	168	Chien Ning Hsi P'ing Kuang Ho Chung P'ing	168 172 178 184
<b>SHAO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Pan Son of Liu Hung Died 189. Age 14 Deposed and murdered by Tung Cho	189	Kuang Hsi Chao Ning	189 189
<b>HSIEN TI or MIN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Hsieh Son of Liu Hung Died 234. Age 54 Deposed 220	189	Yung Han Chung P'ing Ch'u P'ing Hsing P'ing Chien An Yen K'ang	189 189 190 194 196 220

## VIII. EPOCH OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (SAN KUO)

## THE MINOR HAN DYNASTY : 221-264

Family : Liu

Capital : Cheng Tu (Szechuan)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>CHAO LIEH TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Pei A descendant of Ching Ti Died 223. Age 63	221	Chang Wu	221



VIII. EPOCH OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (SAN KUO) (*contd.*)THE MINOR HAN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HOU CHU</b> Son of Liu Pei Dethroned 263 by Wei Died 271. Age 55	223	Chien Hsing Yen Hsi Ching Yao Yen Hsing	223 238 258 263

## THE WEI DYNASTY: 220-265

Family: Ts'ao

Capital: Lo yang (Honan)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ts'ao P'ei Son of Ts'ao Ts'ao Died 226. Age 40	220	Huang Ch	220
<b>MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ts'ao Jui Son of P'ei Born 205 Died 239. Age 36	227	T'ai Ho Ch'ing Lung Ching Ch'u	227 233 237
<b>FEI TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ch'i Wang Fang Ts'ao Fang Adopted son of Ts'ao Jui Deposed 254 Died 274. Age 43	240	Chêng Shih Chia P'ing	240 249
<b>SHAO TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Kao Kuei Hsiang Kung Ts'ao Mao Grandson of Ts'ao P'ei Killed 260. Age 21	254	Chêng Yüan Kan Lu	254 256
<b>YÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ts'ao Huan Grandson of Ts'ao Ts'ao Abdicated 265 Died 302. Age 58	260	Ching Yüan Hsien Hsi	260 264

VIII. EPOCH OF THE THREE KINGDOMS (SAN KUO)  
(continued)

THE WU DYNASTY : 229-280

Family : Sun

Capital : Nanking = Kiang Ning

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>TA 'TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Sun Ch'üan Younger son of Sun Chien Died 252. Age 71	222	Huang Wu Huang Lung Chia Ho Ch'ih Wu T'ai Yüan Shên Fêng	222 229 232 238 251 252
<b>FEI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Sun Liang Kuei Chi Wang Youngest son of Sun Chuan Dethroned 258. Died 260. Age 18	252	Chien Hsing Wu Fêng T'ai P'ing	252 254 256
<b>CHING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Sun Hsui Sixth son of Sun Ch'üan Died 264. Age 30	258	Yung An	258
<b>MO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Sun Hao Kuei Ming Hou Grandson of Sun Ch'üan, Son of Sun Ho Deposed 280 Died 283. Age 42	264	Yüan Hsing Kan Lu Pao Ting Chien Hêng Fêng Huang T'ien T'sê T'ien Hsi T'ien Chi	264 265 266 269 272 275 276 277

IX. THE WESTERN CHIN DYNASTY : 265-316

Family : Ssü-ma

Capital : Ch'ang-an and Lo yang

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yen Eldest son of Ssü-ma Chao Died 290. Age 55	265	T'ai Shih Hsien Ning T'ai K'ang T'ai Hsi	265 275 280 290



IX. THE WESTERN CHIN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HUI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Ch'ien Son of Ssü-ma Yen Poisoned 306. Age 47	290	Yung Hsi Yung P'ing Yüan K'ang Yung K'ang Yung Ning T'ai An Yung Hsing Yung An Chien Wu Yung An Kuang Hsi	290 291 291 300 301 302 304 304 304  306
<b>HUAI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Chih Youngest son of Wu Ti Dethroned and taken prisoner by the Hun Han Liu Ts'ung 311 Killed 313. Age 30	307	Yung Chia	307
<b>MIN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yeh Grandson of Wu Ti Dethroned 316 Killed 317. Age 48	313	Chien Hsing	313

## X. THE EASTERN CHIN DYNASTY: 317-420

Family: Ssü-ma

Capital: Nanking (Chien K'ang)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>YÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Niu Jui Great-grandson of Wu Ti Died 322. Age 47	317 as Chin Wang 318 as Emperor	Chien Wu T'ai Hsing Yung Ch'ang	317 318 322
<b>MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Shao Eldest son of Yüan Ti Died 325. Age 27	323	T'ai Ning	323

X. THE EASTERN CHIN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>CH'ENG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yen Eldest son of Ming Ti Died 342. Age 23	326	Hsien Ho Hsien K'ang	326 335
<b>K'ANG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yo Younger son of Ming Ti Died 344. Age 23	343	Chien Yuan	343
<b>MU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Tan Son of K'ang Ti Died 361. Age 19	345	Yung Ho Shêng P'ing	345 357
<b>AI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma P'ei Eldest son of Ch'êng Ti Died 365. Age 25	362	Lung Ho Hsing Ning	362 363
<b>TI YI. (HAI HSI KUNG)</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yi Son of Ch'êng Ti Dethroned 371 Died 376. Age 45	366	T'ai Ho	366
<b>CHIEN WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yü A younger son of Yüan Ti Died 372. Age 53	371	Hsien An	371
<b>HSIAO WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Yao Third son of Chien Wên Ti Killed by a favourite 396. Age 35	373	Ning K'ang T'ai Yüan	373 376



X. THE EASTERN CHIN DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>AN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Te Son of Hsiao Wu Ti Strangled 418. Age 37	397	Lung An Yüan Hsing Lung An Ta Hsiang Yüan Hsing I Hsi	397 402 402 402 403 405
<b>KUNG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ssü-ma Tê-wên Younger son of Hsiao Wu Ti Abdicated 421 in favour of Liu Yü Killed 421. Age 36	419	Yüan Hsi	419

EPOCH OF DIVISION BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH,  
NAN PEI CHAO

## XI. THE SUNG DYNASTY : 420-479

Family : Liu

Capital : Nanking

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Yü A descendant from a brother of the founder of the Han Dynasty Died 422. Age 60	420	Yung Ch'u	420
<b>SHAO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu I-fu (Ying- Yang Wang) Son of Wu Ti Deposed 424 Killed 424. Age 19	423	Ching P'ing	423
<b>WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu J-lung Third son of Liu Yü Killed by his son Liu Shao 453. Age 47	424	Yüan Chia	424

XI. THE SUNG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSIAO WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Chün Third son of Liu J-lung Died 465. Age 35	454	Hsiao Chien Ta Ming Yung Kuang	454 457 465
<b>FEI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Yeh Son of Liu Chün Killed 465. Age 17	465	Ching Ho	465
<b>MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Yü Eleventh son of Wên Ti Died 472. Age 34	465	T'ai Shih T'ai Yü	465 472
<b>TS'ANG-WU WANG</b> or <b>CHU YÜ</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Yü Adopted son of Wu Ti Killed by Hsiao Tao- ch'êng 477. Age 15	473	Yüan Hui	473
<b>SHUN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Liu Chun Third son of Ming Ti Deposed and killed by Hsiao Tao-ch'êng 479. Age 13	477	Shêng Ming	477

## XII. THE SOUTHERN CH'I DYNASTY: 479-502

Family : Hsiao

Capital : Nanking

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KAO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Tao-ch'êng A reputed descendant of Hsiao Ho, Liu Pang's best adviser Died 482. Age 56	479	Chien Yüan	479



XII. THE SOUTHERN CH'I DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Tsê Son of Hsiao Tao-ch'êng Died 493. Age 54	482	Yung Ming	483
<b>YÜ-LIN WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Chao Yeh Grandson of Hsiao Tsê Killed by Hsiao Luan 494. Age 21	493	Lung Ch'ang	494
<b>HAI-LING WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Chao-wên Grandson of Hsiao Tsê, brother of Hsiao Chao Yeh Deposed by Hsiao Luan Killed 494. Age 15	494	Yen Hsing	494
<b>MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Luan Nephew of Hsiao Tao- ch'êng Died 498. Age 47	494	Chien Wu Yung T'ai	494 498
<b>TUNG-HUN HOU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Pao-chüan Son of Hsiao Luan Deposed by Hsiao Pao- jung Killed 501. Age 19	498	Yung Yüan	499
<b>HO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Pao-jung Eighth son of Hsiao Luan Abdicated in favour of Hsiao Yen Strangled 502. Age 15	501	Chung-Hsing	501

## XIII. THE LIANG DYNASTY : 502-557

Family : Hsiao

Capital : Nanking and Chiang Ling

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Yen A distant connection of the southern Ch'i Died 549. Age 86	502	T'ien Chien P'u T'ung Ta T'ung Chung Ta T'ung Ta T'ung Chung Ta T'ung T'ai Ch'ing	502 520 527 529 535 546 547
<b>CHIEN WEN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Kang Third son of Hsiao Yen Deposed and killed by Hou Ching 551. Age 49	549	Ta Pao	550
<b>YÜ-CHANG WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Chien Son of Hsiao Yen Killed by his brother Hsiao I Died 552	551	T'ien Chêng	551
<b>YÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao I Seventh son of Hsiao Yen Killed 554. Age 47	552	Ch'êng Shêng	552
<b>CHÊNG-YANG HOU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Yüan-Ming A prince of the Imperial house of Liang Abdicated in favour of Hsiao Fang-chih	555	T'ien Ch'êng  Shao T'ai	555  555
<b>CHING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsiao Fang-Chih Ninth son of Hsiao I Abdicated in favour of Ch'ên Pa-hsien 557 Killed 558. Age 16	555	T'ai P'ing	556



## XIV. THE CH'ÊN DYNASTY: 557-589

Family: Ch'ên

Capital: (1) Nanking and (2) Chiang-Ling

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ch'ên Pa-hsien A descendant of Ch'ên Shih, a noted official of the Han Dynasty Died 559. Age 57	557	Yung Ting	557
<b>WEN TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ch'ên Ch'ien Nephew of Ch'ên Pa-hsien Died 566	560	T'ien Chia T'ien K'ang	560 566
<b>LIN-HAI WANG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ch'ên Po-tsung Son of Ch'ên Ch'ien Dethroned 568 Killed 570. Age 19	567	Kuang Ta	567
<b>HSÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ch'ên Hsü Brother of Ch'ên Ch'ien Died 582. Age 53	569	Ta Chien	569
<b>HOU CHU</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Ch'ên Shu-pao Eldest son of Ch'ên Hsü Dethroned and degraded to Duke of Ch'ang-ch'êng by Yang Chien in 589 Died 604. Age 52	583	Chih Tê Ch'êng Ming	583 587

XV. THE NORTHERN WEI DYNASTY (HOUSE OF TOBA) :  
386-535

ALSO CALLED YÜAN WEI DYNASTY

Family : Toba

Capital : (1) P'ing Ch'êng (Tatung Fu Shansi),  
(2) Lo yang

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>TAO WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Kuei Murdered by his son Toba Chao 409. Age 39	386	Têng Kuo Huang Shih T'ien Hsing T'ien Tz'ü	386 396 398 404
<b>MING YÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Ssü Son of Toba Kuei Died 423. Age 32	409	Yung Hsing Shên Jui T'ai Ch'ang	409 414 416
<b>T'AI WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Tao Son of Toba Ssü Murdered 452. Age 45	424	Shih Kuang Shên Chia Yen Ho T'ai Yen T'ai P'ing Chên Chün Chêng P'ing	424 428 432 435 440 440 452
<b>NAN-AN WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba yü Son of T'ai Wu Ti Killed 452	452	Ch'êng P'ing	452
<b>WÊN CH'ÈNG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Chün Grandson of Toba Tao Nephew of T'ai Wu Ti Died 466. Age 26	452	Hsing An Hsing Kuang T'ai An Ho P'ing	452 454 455 460
<b>HSIEN WEN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Hung Son of Toba Chün Poisoned by his wife 476. Age 23	466	T'ien An Huang Hsing	466 467



XV. THE NORTHERN WEI DYNASTY (HOUSE OF TOBA)  
(continued)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSIAO WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan Hung Yen Changed name of dynasty to Yüan and transferred residence to Lo <sup>1</sup> yang Son of Toba Hung Died 499. Age 33	471	Yen Hsing Ch'êng Ming T'ai Ho	471 476 477
<b>HSÜAN WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan K'o Son of Yüan Hung Yen Died 515. Age 33	500	Ching Ming Chêng Shih Yung P'ing Yen Ch'ang	500 504 508 512
<b>HSIAO MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan I Son of Yüan K'o Poisoned by his mother, the Empress Hu, 528. Age 19	516	Hsi P'ing Shên Kuei Chêng Kuang Hsiao Ch'ang	516 517 519 525
<b>LIN-T'AO WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan Chao Descendant of Hsiao Wên Ti Drowned with the Empress Hu by Erh Chu-jung 528. Age 3	528	Wu T'ai	528
<b>HSIAO CHUANG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yuan Tzŭ-yu Grandson of Toba Hung Strangled by Erh Chu Chao 530. Age 24	528	Chien I Yung An Kêng Hsing	528 528 529
<b>T'UNG-HAI WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan Hua Descendant of Toba Hung Deposed and killed by Kao Huan	530	Chien Ming	530

XV. THE NORTHERN WEI DYNASTY (HOUSE OF TOBA)  
(continued)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>CHIEH MIN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan Kung Descendant of Toba Hung Deposed and killed by Kao Huan Died 531	531	Chin T'ai	531
<b>AN TING WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan Liang Descendant of Toba Hung Deposed and killed by Kao Huan 531	531	Chung Hsing	531
<b>HSIAO WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yüan Hsiu Grandson of Yuan Tzŭ-yu Poisoned by Yü-wên T'ai 534	532	T'ai Ch'ang Yung Hsing Yung Hsi	532 532 532

XVI. THE WESTERN WEI DYNASTY: 535-557

Family: Toba

Capital: Ch'ang-an

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Pao Chü A grandson of Yüan Hung Yen Poisoned by Yü Wên T'ai Died 551. Age 45	535	Ta T'ung	535
<b>TI CH'IN or FEI TI</b> Son of Wên Ti Deposed and killed by Yü-wên T'ai 553	552		



XVI. THE WESTERN WEI DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KUNG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Kuo Abdicated in favour of Yü-wên Chūo Killed 557	554		

## XVII. THE EASTERN WEI DYNASTY : 534-550

Family : Toba

Capital : Ye K'ai Fêng Fu (Honan)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSIAO CHING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Toba Shan Chien A grandson of Yüan Hung Yen 550, Abdicated in favour of Kao Yang Poisoned by Kao Yang 551. Age 28	534	T'ien P'ing Yüan Hsiang Hsing Ho Wu Ting	534 538 539 543

## XVIII. THE NORTHERN CH'I DYNASTY : 550-577

Family : Kao

Capital : Yeh (Honan)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WÊN HSÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Yang Son of Kao Huan Died 559. Age 31	550	T'ien Pao	550
<b>FEI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Yin Son of Kao Yang Dethroned 560 Killed 561. Age 17	560	Ch'ien Ming	560

XVIII. THE NORTHERN CH'I DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSIAO CHAO TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Yen Brother of Kao Yang Died 561. Age 29	560	Huang Chien	560
<b>WU CH'ENG-TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Chan Brother to Kao Yen Abdicated in favour of his son Kao Wei Died 568. Age 32	561	T'ai Ning	561
<b>WEN KUNG or HOU CHU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Wei Son of Kao Chan Killed by Northern Chous 577	565	T'ien Tung Wu P'ing Lung Hua	565 570 576
<b>AN-TE WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Yen-tsung Son of Kao Wei Killed by Northern Chous 577	577	Tê Ch'ang	577
<b>YU CHU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao H'êng Son of Kao Wei Killed by Northern Chous	577	Ch'eng Kuang	577

## XIX. THE NORTHERN CHOU DYNASTY : 556-581

Family : Yü-wên

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSIAO MIN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yü-wên Chüo Third son of Yü-wên T'ai Deposed and killed by Yü-wên Hu 557	556		



XIX. THE NORTHERN CHOU DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>MING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yü-wên Yü Son of Yü-wên T'ai Poisoned by Yü-wên Hu 560	557	Wu Ch'êng  Pao Ting	558  561
<b>WU TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yü-wên Yung Brother to Yü-wên Yü Died 578. Age 36	561	T'ien Ho Chien Tê	566 572
<b>HSÜAN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yü-wên Ping Son of Yü-wên Yung Abdicated in favour of his son Yü-wên Chan 579 Died 580. Age 27	578	Hsüan Ch'êng Ta Ch'êng	578 579
<b>CHING TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yü-wên Chan Son of Hsüan Ti Abdicated in favour of Yang Chien 581 Killed 581. Age 9	580	Ta Hsiang Ta Ting	580 581

## XX. THE SUI DYNASTY : 589-618

Family : Yang

Capital : (1) Ch'ang-an  
(2) Lo yang

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WÊN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yang Chien <i>Temple Name :</i> Kao Tsu Son of Yang Chung, Duke of Sui	589	K'ai Huang Jên Shou	581 601

XX. THE SUI DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WÊN TI</b> ( <i>contd.</i> ) Descendant of the famous Scholar Yang Chên Murdered by his son Yang Kuang 604. Age 64			
<b>YANG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yang Kuang Second son of Yang Chien Murdered by Yü-wên Hua-chi 618. Age 50	605	Ta Yeh	605
<b>KUNG TI YU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yang Yu, Prince of Tai Grandson of Yang Chien Abdicated in favour of Li Yüan 618 Died 619. Age 15	617	I Ning	617
<b>KUNG TI T'UNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yang T'ung Grandson of Yang Kuang Poisoned by Wang Shih ch'ung 619	618	H'uang T'ai	618

## XXI. THE T'ANG DYNASTY: 618-907

Family : Li

Capital : Ch'ang-an

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KAO TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Yüan Son of the Duke of T'ang	618	Wu Tê	618



XXI. THE T'ANG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KAO TSU</b> ( <i>contd.</i> ) Abdicated in favour of his son Li Shih-min 626 Died 635. Age 70			
<b>T'AI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Shih-min Second son of Li Yüan Died 649. Age 53	627	Chêng Kuan	627
<b>KAO TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Chih Ninth son of Li Shih- min Died 683. Age 56	650	Yung Hui Hsien Ch'ing Lung So Lin Tê Ch'ien Fêng Tsung Chang Hsien Hêng Shang Yüan I Fêng T'iao Lu Yung Lung K'ai Yao Yung Shun Hung Tao	650 656 661 664 666 668 670 674 676 679 680 681 682 683
<b>CHUNG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Hsien or Chê Son of Li Chih 684, Deposed and im- prisoned by the Dow- ager Empress Wu	684	Ssü Shêng	684
<b>JUI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Tan Younger son of Li Chih	684	Wên Ming	684
<b>WU HOU</b> (The Em- press Wu, usurper) <i>Personal Name :</i> Wu Chao Born 625 Died 705	684	Kuang Tsê Chui Kung Yung Ch'ang Tsai Ch'u T'ien Shou	684 685 689 689 690

XXI. THE T'ANG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
Adopted the dynastic style Chou in lieu of T'ang from A.D. 690		Ju I Ch'ang Shou	692 692
<b>WU HOU</b>		Yen Tsai Chêng Shêng T'ien T'sê Wan Sui Wan Sui T'ung T'ien Shên Kung Shêng Li Chiu Tsu Ta Tsu Ch'ang An	694 695 695  696  697 698 700 701 701
<b>CHUNG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Hsien or Chê 705, Resumed the throne Poisoned by his wife, the Empress Wei, 710. Age 55	705	Shên Lung Ching-Lung	705 707
<b>JUI TSUNG</b> Abdicated in favour of Hsüan Tsung 712 Died 716. Age 55	710	Ching Yün T'ai Chi Yen Ho	710 712 712
<b>HSÜAN TSUNG</b> (or Yüan Tsung) <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Lung Chi <i>Temple Name :</i> Ming Huang Ti Third son of Li Tan Abdicated in favour of his son Li Ting 754 Died 762. Age 78	713	Hsien T'ien K'ai Yüan T'ien Pao	713 713 742
<b>SU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Ting Son of Li Lung Chi Died 762. Age 51	756	Chih Tê Ch'ien Yüan Shang Yüan Pao Ying Changed in 761 to Yüan Nien, the first year of all time	756



XXI. THE T'ANG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>TAI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Yü (originally named Shü) Second son of Li Ting Died 779. Age 52	763	Kuang Tê Yung T'ai Ta Li	763 763 766
<b>TÊ TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Kua Eldest son of Li Yü Died 805. Age 64	780	Chien Chung Hsing Yüan Chêng Yüan	780 784 785
<b>SHUN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Sung Son of Li Kua Abdicated in favour of his son Li Ch'un Died 806. Age 46	805	Yung Chêng	805
<b>HSIEN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Shun Son of Li Sung Murdered by an eunuch 820. Age 43	806	Yüan Ho	806
<b>MU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Hêng Son of Li Shun Died, poisoned by drug of immortality, 824. Age 30	821	Ch'ang Ch'ing	821
<b>CHING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Chan Son of Li Hêng Murdered by eunuchs 826. Age 18	825	Pao Li	825
<b>WÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Han Second son of Li Hêng Died 840. Age 38	827	T'ai Ho K'ai Ch'êng	827 836

XXI. THE T'ANG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>WU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Yen Fifth son of Li Hêng Died 846. Age 33	841	Hui Ch'ang	841
<b>HSÜAN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Shên Thirteenth son of Li Shun Died, poisoned by drug of immortality, 859. Age 50	847	T'ai Chung	847
<b>I TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Ts'ui Eldest son of Li Shên Died 873. Age 41	860	Hsien T'ung	860
<b>HSI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Yen Fifth son of Li Ts'ui Died 888. Age 27	874	Ch'ien Fu Kuang Ming Chung Ho Kuang Ch'i Wên Tê	874 880 881 885 888
<b>CHAO TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Chieh Seventh son of Li Ts'ui Murdered by order of Chu Wên 904. Age 38	889	Lung Chi Ta Shun Ching Fu Ch'ien Ning Kuang Hua T'ien Fu T'ien Yu	889 890 892 894 898 901 904
<b>CHAO HSÜAN TI</b> or <b>AI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Chu Ninth son of Li Chieh Abdicated in favour of Chu Wên Born 892 Murdered by Chu Wên 908. Age 17	904	T'ien Yu	905



## EPOCH OF THE FIVE DYNASTIES: 907-960

## I

## XXII. THE LATTER LIANG DYNASTY: 907-923

Capital: (1) Pien Liang  
(2) Lo yang

Family: Chu

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Chu Wên Native of Honan Killed by his son Chu Yu-Kuei 912. Age 61	907	K'ai P'ing Ch'ien Hua	907 911
<b>MO TI or CHÜN WANG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Chu Yu-chên Son of Chu Wên Committed suicide 923. Age 36	913	Chêng Ming Lung Tê	915 921

## II

## XXIII. THE LATTER T'ANG DYNASTY: 923-936

Capital: (1) Wei Chou  
(2) Lo yang

Family: Li

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>CHUANG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Li Tz'un-hsü or Li Ya-tzũ Son of Li K'o-yung Assassinated by an actor 926. Age 43	923	T'ung Kuang	923
<b>MING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Li Ssü Yüan or Mo- chi-lieh An adopted son of Li K'o-yung Died 933. Age 67	926	T'ien Ch'êng Ch'ang Hsing	926 930

XXIII. THE LATTER T'ANG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>MIN TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Tsung-hou Son of Li Ssü Yüan Murdered by Li Tsung- k'o 934	933	Ying Shun	934
<b>FEI TI or LU WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Li Tsung-k'o Adopted son of Li Tsung-Yüan Perished in burning Palace 936. Age 52	934	Ch'ing T'ai	934

## III

## XXIV. THE LATTER CHIN DYNASTY: 936-946

Capital : (1) Lo yang  
 Family : Shih (2) Pien Liang = Kai-feng-fu

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KAO TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Shih Ching-t'ang Son-in-law of Min Ti of the Latter T'ang Died 942. Age 56	936	T'ien Fu	936
<b>CH'U TI or SHAO TI            or CH'I WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Shih Ch'ung-kuei Nephew of Shih Ching- t'ang Dethroned, degraded to to the rank of Mar- quis and exiled by the Kitans in 946	942	K'ai Yün	944



## IV

## XXV. THE LATTER HAN DYNASTY: 947-950

Family: Liu

Capital: Kai-feng-fu

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KAO TSU</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Liu Chih-yüan Of Turkish descent Died 948. Age 54	947	T'ien Fu Ch'ien Yu	936 948
<b>YIN TI</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Liu Ch'êng-yu Son of Liu Chih-yüan Killed by his officers 950. Age 20	948	Ch'ien Yu	960

## V

## XXVI. THE LATTER CHOU DYNASTY: 950-960

Family: Kuo

Capital: Pien Liang = Kai-feng-fu

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Kuo Wei Descendant of younger brother of Wên Wang Died 953. Age 51	951	Kuang Shun	951
<b>SHIH TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Kuo Yung Adopted son of Kuo Wei Son of Ch'ai Shou-li, brother-in-law to Kuo Wei Died 959. Age 39	954	Hsien Tê	954
<b>KUNG TI</b> Son of Kuo Yung 960. Abdicated in favour of Chao K'uang-yin Died 973. Age 22	959	Hsien Tê	960

## THE TARTAR DYNASTIES

XXVII. THE LIAO DYNASTY (CH'I-TAN OR KITAN  
TARTARS): 907-1154

Family: Yeh-lü

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Yeh-lü Cho-li-chih- O-pao-chi Died 926	907	Shên Ts'ê T'ien Tsan T'ien Hsien	916 922 925
<b>T'AI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Yeh-lü Tê-kuang Second son of Yeh-lü Cho-li-chih Died 947	927	T'ien Hsien Hui T'ung Ta T'ung	925 937 946
<b>SHIH TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Yeh-lü Yüan Nephew of Yeh-lü Tê- kuang Murdered 951	947	T'ien Lu	947
<b>MU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Yeh-lü Kung Son of Yeh-lü Tê- kuang Killed by his cook 968	951	Ying Li	951
<b>CHING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Yeh-lü Hsien Son of Yeh-lü Yüan Died 983	968	Pao Ning Ch'ien Hêng	968 978
<b>SHÊNG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name:</i> Yeh-lü Lung-hsü Son of Yeh-lü Hsien Died 1031	983	T'ung Ho K'ai T'ai T'ai P'ing	983 1012 1020



XXVII. THE LIAO DYNASTY (CH'I-TAN OR KITAN TARTARS)  
(continued)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yeh-lü Tsung-chên Eighth son of Yeh-lü Lung-hsü Died 1055	1031	Ching Fu Ch'ung Hsi	1020 1032
<b>TAO TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yeh-lü Hung-chi Son of Yeh-lü Tsung- chên Died 1101. Age 70	1055	Ch'ing Ning Hsien Yung Ta K'ang Ta An	1055 1066 1074 1083
<b>TIEN TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yeh-lü Yen-hsi Grandson of Yeh-lü Hung-chi Died 1125. Age 54	1101	Ch'ien T'ung T'ien Ch'ing Pao Ta	1101 1110 1119
<b>TÊ TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yeh-lü Ta-shih A member of the Im- perial family of the Liao Dynasty Born 1098 Died 1135	1125	Yen Ch'ing K'ang Kuo	1125 1126
<b>KAN T'IENT HOU</b> Wife of Yeh-lü Ta-shih Abdicated in favour of her son 1142 Died 1153	1136	Hsien Ch'ing	1136
<b>JÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yeh-lü Yi-lieh Son of Yeh-lü Ta-shih Died 1154	1142	Shao Hsing	1142

## XXVIII. THE WESTERN LIAO DYNASTY: 1154-1199

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>CH'ENG T'IENT</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ch'eng T'ien T'ai Hou Daughter of Yeh-lü Ta- shih Killed 1167	1154	Ch'ung Fu Huang Tê Ch'ung Tê T'ien Hsi	1154 1154 1154 1168
<b>MO CHU</b> Son of Jen Tsung Dethroned by his brother-in-law Gout- chlouc Khan of Nai- man in 1199 Died 1201	1168	T'ien Hsi	1168

XXIX. THE CHIN DYNASTY OF NÜ-CHEN TARTARS:  
1115-1234

Family : Wan-yen

Capital : Sheng Ching

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Akuta Son of the chieftain Yang Ko Died 1123. Age 56	1115	Shou Kuo T'ien Fu	1115 1115
<b>T'AI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Shêng Okimai=Wu ch'i mai Son of the chieftain Yang Ko Died 1135. Age 61	1123	T'ien Hui	1123
<b>HSI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Tan Eldest grandson of Akuta Killed by Wan-yen Liang 1149. Age 31	1135	T'ien Hui T'ien Chüan Huang T'ung	1135 1135 1141



XXIX. THE CHIN DYNASTY OF NÜ-CHEN TARTARS  
(continued)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HAI LING WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Liang Grandson of Akuta Killed by his generals 1161. Age 40	1149	T'ien Tê Chêng Yüan Chêng Lung	1149 1153 1156
<b>SHIH TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen P'ou Brother of Wan-yen Liang Died 1189. Age 67	1161	Ta Ting	
<b>CHANG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Kung Grandson of Wan-yen P'ou Died 1208. Age 41	1190	Ming Ch'ang Ch'êng An T'ai Ho	1190 1196 1201
<b>WEI-SHAO WANG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Yün Chi Son of Wan-yen P'ou Killed 1213	1209	Ta An Ch'ung Ch'ing Chih Ning	1209 1212 1213
<b>HSÜAN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Hsün Eldest grandson of Wan-yen P'ou Died 1223. Age 61	1213	Chêng Yu Hsing Ting Yüan Küang	1213 1217 1222
<b>AI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Wan-yen Shou-hsü Third son of Wan-yen Hsün Committed suicide 1234. Age 37	1224	Chêng Ta T'ien Hsing K'ai Hsing	1224 1232 1233
<b>MO TI or HOU CHU</b> Descendant of Yang Ko <i>Personal Name :</i> Ch'êng-lin Killed 1234	1234	Shêng Ch'ang	1234

## XXX. THE SUNG DYNASTY: 960-1126.

ALSO CALLED NORTHERN SUNG DYNASTY.

Family: Chao.

Capital: Pien Liang = Kai-feng-fu

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Kuang-yin Descendant of T'ang officials Died 976. Age 50	960	Chien Lung Ch'ien Tê K'ai Pao T'ai P'ing	960 963 968 976
<b>T'AI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Huang Brother of T'ai Tsu Died 997. Age 59	976	Hsing Kuo Yung Hsi Tuan Kung Shun Hua Chih Tao	976 984 988 990 995
<b>CHÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Hêng Third son of Chao Huang Died 1022. Age 55	997	Hsien P'ing Ching Tê Ta Chung Hsiang Fu T'ien Hsi Ch'ien Hsing	998 1004 1008 1008 1017 1022
<b>JÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Chên Sixth son of Chao Hêng Died 1063. Age 54	1022	T'ien Shêng Ming Tao Ching Yu Pao Yüan K'ang Ting Ch'ing Li Huang Yu Chih Ho Chia Yu	1023 1032 1034 1038 1040 1041 1049 1054 1056
<b>YING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Shu Cousin to Chao Chên Died 1067. Age 36	1063	Chih P'ing	1064
<b>SHÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Hsü Eldest son of Chao Shu Died 1085. Age 38	1067	Hsi Ning Yüan Fêng	1068 1078
<b>CHÊ TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Hsü Son of Chao Hsü Died 1100. Age 25	1085	Yüan Yu Shao Shêng Yüan Fu	1086 1094 1098



XXX. THE SUNG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HUI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Chi Son of Chao Hsü (Shên Tsung) Brother of Chê Tsung Died in Nü-chen captivity 1135. Age 54	1100	Chien Chung Ching Kuo Ch'ung Ning Ta Kuan Chêng Ho Ch'ung Ho Hsüan Ho	1101 1102 1102 1107 1111 1118 1119
<b>CH'IN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Huan Eldest son of Chao Chi Killed in Nü-chen captivity 1156. Age 61	1126	Ching K'ang	1126

## XXXI. THE SOUTHERN SUNG DYNASTY: 1127-1279

Family : Chao

Capital : Hangchow

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KAO TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Kou Ninth son of Chao Chi Abdicated in favour of his adopted son 1162 Died 1187. Age 81	1127	Chien Yen Shao Hsing	1127 1131
<b>HSIAO TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Shên Adopted son of Chao Kou 1189, Abdicated in favour of his son Chao Tun Died 1194. Age 68	1162	Lung Hsing Ch'ien Tao Shun Hsi	1163 1165 1174

XXXI. THE SOUTHERN SUNG DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>KUANG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Tun Third son of Chao Shên Abdicated 1194 in favour of his son Chao K'uo Died 1200. Age 54	1189	Shao Hsi	1190
<b>NING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao K'uo Third son of Chao Tun Died 1224. Age 77	1194	Ch'ing Yüan Chia T'ai K'ai Hsi Chia Ting	1195 1201 1205 1208
<b>LI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Yün Descendant in eleventh generation of Chao Kuang-yin Died 1264	1224	Pao Ch'ing Shao Ting Tuan P'ing Shun Yu Pao Yu K'ai Ch'ing Ching Ting	1225 1228 1234 1241 1253 1259 1260
<b>TU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Ch'i Cousin of Chao Yün Died 1294. Age 35	1264	Hsien Shun	1265
<b>KUNG TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Hsien Third son of Chao Ch'i Surrendered to Kublai Khan 1276 Died as a Buddhist monk 1288	1274	Tê Yu	1275
<b>TUAN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Shih Eldest son of Chao Ch'i Died 1278. Age 10	1276	Ching Yen	1276
<b>TI PING</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chao Ping Youngest son of Chao Ch'i Drowned 1279. Age 9	1278	Hsiang Hsing	1278



## XXXII. THE YUAN (MONGOL) DYNASTY: 1206-1368

Capital: (1) Karakorum = Ho-lin

(2) Kambalik = Peking

Dynastic Title.		Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
Chinese.	Mongol.			
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Genghis Khan Son of Yehsu-Kai Born 1162 Died 1227. Age 66	<b>TEMU- CHIN or GENGHIS</b>	1206		
<b>T'AI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ogotai Khan Third son of Gen- ghis Khan Died 1241. Age 56	<b>OGDAI or OGOTAI</b>	1229		
<b>TING TSUNG</b> Son of Ogotai Khan Died 1248. Age 43	<b>GAYUK or KUYAK</b>	1246		
<b>HSIEN TSUNG</b> Eldest son of Tuli and grandson of Genghis Khan Died 1268. Age 52	<b>MANGU</b>	1251		
<b>SHIH TSU</b> Fourth son of Tuli and grandson of Genghis Khan Died 1294. Age 80	<b>KUBLAI or SITCHEN</b>	1260	Chung T'ung Chih Yuan	1260 1264
<b>CH'ENG TSUNG</b> Grandson of Kub- lai Died 1307. Age 42	<b>TIMUR or OLCHEITU</b>	1294	Yuan Cheng Ta Te	1295 1297
<b>WU TSUNG</b> Nephew of Timur Died 1311. Age 31	<b>KAISUN or GULUK</b>	1307	Chih Ta	1308

XXXII. THE YUAN (MONGOL) DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.		Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
Chinese.	Mongol.			
<b>JÊN TSUNG</b> Brother of Kaisun Died 1320. Age 36	<b>AYULI PALPATA</b>	1311	Huang Ch'ing Yen Yu	1312 1314
<b>YING TSUNG</b> Son of Ayuli Pal- pata Murdered by his chamberlain 1323. Age 21	<b>SOTPALA</b>	1320	Chih Chih	1321
<b>T'AI TING TI</b> Nephew of Timur Khan Died 1328	<b>YESUN TIMUR</b>	1323	T'ai Ting Chih Ho	1324 1328
<b>YU CHU</b> Son of Yesun Timur Killed 1328	<b>ACHAKPA</b>	1328	T'ien Shun	1328
<b>MING TSUNG</b> Eldest son of Kai- sun Died suddenly and suspiciously 1329. Age 30	<b>HOSILA</b>	1329	T'ien Li	1329
<b>WÊN TI</b> Second son of Kai- sun Died 1332. Age 29	<b>TUP TIMUR</b>	1329	T'ien Li Chih Shun	1330 1330
<b>NING TSUNG</b> Second son of Ho- sila Died 1332. Age 7	<b>ILE CHEPE</b>	1332		
<b>SHUN TI or HUI TSUNG</b> Son of Hosila Fled from Peking 1368 Died 1370. Age 50	<b>TOHAN TIMUR</b>	1333	Yüan T'ung Chih Yüan Chih Chêng	1333 1335 1341



## XXXIII. THE MING DYNASTY: 1368-1644

Family : Chu

Capital : (1) Nanking,  
from 1420 (2) Peking

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>T'AI TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chu Yüan-chang Native of Anhui Died 1398. Age 71	1368	Hung Wu	1368
<b>HUI TI</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chu Yün Wen Son of Piao (eldest son of Chu Yüan- chang), grandson of T'ai Tsu Disappeared 1402 Perhaps died 1440	1398	Chien Wen	1399
<b>CH'ENG TSU</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chu Ti Fourth son of Chu Yüan- chang Died 1424. Age 65	1402	Yung Lo	1403
<b>JÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Kao Chih Eldest son of Chu Ti Died 1425. Age 48	1424	Hung Hsi	1425
<b>HSÜAN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chan Chi Eldest son of Kao Chih Died 1435. Age 38	1425	Hsüan Tê	1426
<b>YING TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ch'i Chên Son of Chan Chi Captured by Mongols 1449	1435	Chêng T'ung	1436
<b>TAI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ch'i Yü Son of Chan Chi Died 1457. Age 30	1449	Ching T'ai	1450

XXXIII. THE MING DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>YING TSUNG</b> (re- sumed government) Died 1464. Age 38	1457	T'ien Shun	1457
<b>HSIEN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Chien Shên Eldest son of Ch'i Chên Died 1487. Age 41	1464	Ch'êng Hua	1465
<b>HSIAO TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yu T'ang Son of Chien Shên Died 1505. Age 36	1487	Hung Chih	1488
<b>WU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hou Chao Son of Yu T'ang Died 1521. Age 31	1505	Chêng Tê	1506
<b>SHIH TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hou Tsung Nephew of Yu T'ang Died 1567. Age 60	1521	Chia Ching	1522
<b>MU TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Tsai Hou Son of Hou Tsung Died 1572. Age 36	1566	Lung Ch'ing	1567
<b>SHÊN TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yi Chün Son of Tsai Hou Died 1620. Age 56	1572	Wan Li	1573
<b>KUANG TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Ch'ang Lo Son of Yi Chün Died, poisoned by an eunuch, 1620. Age 39	1620	T'ai Ch'ang	1620



XXXIII. THE MING DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.	When adopted. A.D.
<b>HSI TSUNG</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yu-siao Son of Ch'ang Lo Died 1627. Age 23	1620	T'ien Ch'i	1621
<b>HUAI TSUNG or</b> <b>Chuang Lieh Min</b> <b>Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yu Chien Son of Ch'ang Lo Committed suicide 1644. Age 35	1627	Ch'ung Chêng	1628

## XXXIV. THE CH'ING (MANCHU) DYNASTY: 1583-1912

Clan : Gioro

Capital: (1) Mukden  
(2) Peking

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.
<b>Chao Tsu Yüan Huang Ti</b> <b>Hsing Tsu Chih Huang Ti</b> <b>Ching Tsu Yi Huang Ti</b> <b>Hsien Tsu Hsüan Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Aisin Gioro	1583	Tsê Wang Ch'ing Wang Ch'ang Wang Fu Wang
<b>TA'I TSU KAO</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Nurhachu Founder of the Manchu Power Born 1559 Died 1626	1616	T'ien Ming
<b>T'AI TSUNG WÊN</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Huang Taiki Fourth son of Nurhachu Born 1591 Died 1643	1627	T'ien Ts'ung Ch'ung Tê

XXXIV. THE CH'ING DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.
<b>SHIH TSU CHANG</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Fu-lin Ninth son of Huang Taiki Born 1634 Died 1661	1644	Shun-chih
<b>SHÊNG-TSU JÊN</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hsüan yeh Third son of Shun Chih Born 1655 Died 1723	1662	K'ang Hsi
<b>SHIH TSUNG HSIEN</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yin ch'ên Fourth son of K'ang Hsi Born 1677 Died 1735	1723	Yung chêng
<b>KAO TSUNG TUN</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Hung-li Fourth son of Yung Chêng Born 1710 Died 1799.	1736	Ch'ien Lung
<b>JÊN TSUNG JUI</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yung-yen Fifteenth son of Ch'ien Lung Died 1820	1796	Chia Ch'ing
<b>HSÜAN TSUNG CH'ÊNG</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Mien-ning Second son of Chia Ch'ing Born 1781 Died 1850	1820	Tao Kuang



XXXIV. THE CH'ING DYNASTY (*continued*)

Dynastic Title.	Accession. A.D.	Title of Reign.
<b>WÊN TSUNG HSIEN</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Yi-chu Fourth son of Tao Kuang Born 1831 Died 1861	1851	Hsien Fêng
<b>MU TSUNG YI</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Tsai Shun Only son of Hsien Fêng Born 1856 Died 1875	1862	T'ung Chih
<b>TÊ TSUNG CHING</b> <b>Huang Ti</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Tsai T'ien Son of Ch'un I-huan, seventh son of Tao Kuang Born 1871 Died 1908	1875	Kuang Hsü
<b>PU I</b> <i>Personal Name :</i> Henry Abdicated in favour of a Republic 1912	1908	Hsüan T'ung

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Chavannes, Edouard  
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